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THE
CONVENT AND THE HAREM.

BY

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE CONVENT AND THE HAREM.

CHAPTER I.

FOR some time the freebooters unable to believe in such pusillanimity as that exhibited by their captives, almost feared a trick ; but glancing from time to time at the faces of the pair, particularly at that of the friar, they became perfectly reassured, and soon relaxed their vigilance so far as to allow them to approach each other within speaking distance. Torpé was the first to avail himself of this, and with the mechanical solemnity of feature which was all that survived of the inward feeling or principle on which it was first adopted by the precise soldier, the old man now shaking his head mournfully, began,

“ I fear me, Fra Bonafazio, we have cut but a sorry figure this evening.”

The frate groaned in spirit.

“ You are of my opinion, then ?” Torpé resumed, still more disheartened, as he found not even the spiritual comfort he had hoped for.

“ I !” whispered the friar ; “ and what care I what figure we cut if they do not cut our throats or the saddle !”

“ Or the saddle ?” said the soldier ; “ they may cut the saddle to pieces if they please for me—evil was the hour I ever took my seat upon it !”

“ But how did they ever come to suspect where the papers were ?”

“ The papers ! ahem !” and Bonafazio now considering all link between him and the outer world cut off, decided himself at liberty to reveal all to his companion in captivity. Torpé, who had for fifty years fought by Ugolino’s side, felt and expressed himself not a little jealous at being excluded from his master’s confidence in favour of a comparatively new acquaintance.

“ Oh, never think about that,” said the good-natured friar, “ I understand the reason of it too well.”

“ And what may it be ?”

“ That he preferred putting my neck into

jeopardy, and that he might have only me to hang if the treasure came to harm. Oh, *Signore ! Signore ! abbiate misericordia di me !*" and the old soldier smiled grimly as he accepted the explanation ; but ere he had time to give further sign of satisfaction one of the freebooters came up to them and roughly inquired the subject of their discourse.

" We were only wondering whither you were pleased to conduct us," said the friar readily, but humbly.

" And know you not ?" the man asked. " Where do people with tails, cloven feet, and black faces, dwell ? Come, come, hold on !—here, Raniero, lay hold of this chicken-heart ; he asks questions and is about to faint at the answer !"

And in fact the poor friar, between weariness of body after two days of such unusual exercise and terror of mind, was little able to support himself. One of the freebooters gave him some wine, with which they had come provided, not knowing how long they might have had to wait ; and after some minutes he was able to resume his journey. The first use he made of his recovered senses of course was to cast a woe-begone glance at his fellow-prisoner. Torpé, who had really

been a brave man, and *tant soit peu* of a free-booter, forgot his own situation in compassion for his weaker brother, and, moving close to him, once more endeavoured to whisper some words of consolation. But the friar rejected them.

“ You heard them confess, themselves,” he said, “ where we were going. Oh, Lord ! oh, Lord ! *Dominus vobiscum !* but I wonder the Count does not pursue us, even for the sake of the saddle.”

“ Tut !” retorted the other, “ they only said that to frighten you. One does not go up hill to —.”

But the consolatory words had scarcely escaped his lips when a sight appeared before them which caused the old soldier himself to grasp the friar’s outstretched hand with not less tremulous energy than that with which it was offered, while pressing as close as possible to his side with the other he caught hold of the cord that bound his waist in a gripe that plainly said, “ If there be virtue in this I will have my share of it!” and here we must drop the curtain. The least cultivated English taste would no longer endure even the description of what a more than common familiarity with the elements of natural physics

enabled Ghino di Tacco and others of his joyous band to put in force within and around his castle, a sort of fortification which, however ludicrous or absurd it would now be considered, at that time stood him in stead of many a man's life. Flames springing from the earth, skulls skipping about, hideous mouths spitting fire, and all that is now only resorted to for the diversion of children, or as a lesson in natural physics, had then its influence on the fate of nations ; and if there are those amongst our readers incredulous of such effects we beg leave to refer them to the pages of Boccaccio, amongst others. Our friar was not a man superior to his age ; on the contrary, he was one of those who having himself mistaken his vocation, was through the unfounded scrupulosity of those who should have rejected him, admitted to that brotherhood of which it was too late discovered he was an unfitting member. On the present occasion his spirit could endure no more. With one hand, as we have said, he grasped the hand of Torpé, with the other he faintly covered his eyes for a moment, and then with a heavy groan he fell in a dead swoon upon the shoulder of his companion.

Torpé's *mechanism*, if not his will, caught at

the excuse to utter a hideous shout, which seemed, at least, ready prepared ; and, when he would have endeavoured to restore his friend to animation, he felt a bandage suddenly thrown over his own eyes, his arms and legs pinioned, and in this fashion he was carried, with as little ceremony as if he had been a sheaf of oats, first up an ascent, and then down a deep declivity, and finally, as he judged by the noise made by the footsteps of his bearers, through a paved court into a house. In vain he implored for some information ; in vain he pleaded his being guiltless of one *sou* ; not a word was vouchsafed in reply to any of his observations ; and it was not until he perceived that he had been carried down several steps of stairs, and placed, as the opening of a door led him to suppose, in a chamber, that his legs and arms were released, and finally his eyes unbound. Little, however, did that unbinding at first avail him. Either darkest night had set in, or he was in a dungeon ; and it was only by the retreating footsteps of his late bearers, the locking of the door on the outside, and the perfect silence which succeeded, that he judged he was alone. In this supposition he was, however, mistaken. After a few mo-

ments, uttering a deep groan of despair, he heard it faintly re-echoed, but in a tone of deeper terror, and not very distant from where he lay. He took courage from the terror of his companion, and slightly coughed. The groan was repeated in precisely the same tone and manner. Torpé was not, as we have said, a devout believer when his own strength seemed sufficient for his necessities; but, as his confidence was without foundation, so was now his weakness without support. The terrors of superstition took hold upon him; he became silent for a moment, and, at last, not able to endure his sensations,—

“What are you, in the name of God?” he asked.

“I do not know,” was the answer.

“Where are you?” was his next question.

“I do not know,” was again the rejoinder; “and if you take my advice, you will not ask.”

“Not ask! but are we to die here like rats?”

“Die!” retorted the friar, for of course it was he; “a man can die but once, and thank Heaven, my turn is past!”

“Come, come, have done with this mummery; how came you hither?—they carried *me* bound hand and foot.”

"And you may be very sure *I* did not walk ! but that is all I know ; from the moment we found ourselves on the brink of hell I never had one moment's consciousness until you groaned ; so you may guess if I know what or where I am."

Before Torpé had time to make any farther observations, or the frate any farther exclamations, they heard the door open once more, and there appeared a figure, of which, notwithstanding our unwillingness to weary the reader with absurdities, it is necessary to say a few words, in order to explain what ensued. The figure was dressed to represent one of the inferior devils or subordinates of the infernal regions, according to the fantastic ideas and descriptions of the day. It was covered from the top of its head to its feet with black serge, on which were rudely depicted flames of fire. There were holes cut for the eyes, but they were so ingeniously contrived that, while allowing the person to see his way, they were almost concealed by being surmounted by a species of tusks, not unbecoming his supposed abode, and seeming to belong to a monstrous head, super-induced upon, and perfectly concealing that with which nature had

furnished him ; and which, being internally illuminated, with a flame issuing from above, served as a lantern, while adding immeasurably to the terror of the beholders. The long serge dress, held out in a strange manner from the person behind, left a coiled tail to the imagination—bustles being then unknown—and the feet were evidently cloven. When this figure presented itself, the two men suffered more than had been intended, for each was in a state more than usually susceptible of unfounded and irrational fears, the one from too much, the other from too little credulity. They lay as still as a convulsive trembling allowed, with their eyes irresistibly fascinated by the object of their terror ; that object, in the mean time, after several mystical forms gone through, and magic circles described, contrived, without its victims being able to perceive how, to deposit from some part of its dress, a small apparatus on the pavement, and then going again towards the door, opened it ! but before departing, re-entering a step or two, glared upon the victims so as to fix their attention with the utmost intensity, while seeming to uncoil its tail ; and in fact, accordingly, when it once more turned

they beheld a fiery point trail from beneath the gown, and when the figure disappeared there remained upon the spot a small light, which at first they fairly enough supposed to be a spark from that infernal appendage, but which presently blazed up into a very tolerable species of torch or rude lamp which seemed determined to keep them company. Long, long did they gaze upon it, however, before they believed that it was what it now seemed to be ; or that it would not disappear in blue vapour as mysteriously as it had come ; while on the other satanic deposit they had not ventured again to cast their eyes. There is, however, a wonderful power of adaptability in man. The light blazed steadily on, and from the other apparatus, no fresh devils sprang forth ; so that by degrees the friar was able to collect his senses enough to endeavour, although without much hope of success, to make the sign of the cross, as a sort of test to ascertain precisely to which place of punishment he had been adjudged.

To his infinite relief he succeeded, which encouraged him to proceed to attempt some paters and aves, first in a profound whisper ; but as his

courage rose so did his voice, until at last Torpé in tones that might, indeed, almost come from the grave, groaned forth an inquiry as to whom he was conversing with.

“With myself, infidel,” was the reply; “I am trying to say a few prayers.”

“Say them aloud, then.”

“Why, cannot you say your own?”

And the scoffer in his youth was ashamed in his old age to say he could not pray.

“Say your prayers aloud, or talk to me,” he resumed in a nervous agony. “I do not feel well.”

“*Obbligato!*” exclaimed the friar; “but you would feel better if you said your prayers.”

“But I tell you I cannot.”

In the meantime the friar had taken considerable courage from these few words, which shewed him his superiority over his companion. He raised his head, and began to reconnoitre their position. Torpé was stretched upon what in England we should call pathetically “the cold pavement” as the sons of Africa say, “as white as the devil;” but he was, in short, stretched upon the pavement exactly in the position in which he had been deposited there; while the

friar, probably as a mark of respect, had been placed upon a large, rude, wooden bench, in form somewhat like our modern sofas, and similar to those still general in the houses of the peasantry in Italy. He was, moreover, wrapped in a large military cloak as a substitute for that one of which the brigands had deprived him in order to impose on Ugolino. This latter object wakened some agreeable doubts in his mind ; he looked steadily and scrutinisingly at it. At last he ventured to touch it with his hand, and finally the thought arose, “ Why, surely, even in purgatory, to say nothing of a worse place, they would not wrap me in a military cloak ;” but, before hazarding his conjectures to his companion, he examined the apartment in all points with his eyes. It was easily done, for, except the piece of furniture occupied by himself it was destitute of any, and there was not an object to break the dull vacancy, except the deposits of the mysterious visitant and a heap of blanched, dried, ugly, suspicious looking substances, near to an iron ring and broken chain in the wall, from which he turned shuddering away. That which attracted him instead was a slight evaporation, which he had not previously observed arising

from the first deposit made by the apparent devil.

"That is curious," he said, still to himself. "It would not have been at all so, if it had increased and smothered us in its fumes, but lying there harmless all this time, it is curious, Torpé! Do you smell any thing?—I don't mean brimstone."

Torpé did not answer.

"Torpé, I say, what would you think if there were *minestra** in that thing?" he said at last, desperately, nodding his head towards the apparatus. Torpé groaned, for the bare idea, wakened or developed within him, seemed to explain much of what he suffered, without bringing the hope of relief. The friar, however, became momentarily more hopeful.

"It would be curious if we were alive after all," he said, "and only in the claws of Tacco."

"I know we are alive," retorted Torpé, despondingly, "but oh, Fra Bonafazio! *what* a life! and what poor weak creatures the best and bravest amongst us are!"

"How do you know that?" asked the friar,

* We prefer not translating *minestra* by "broth," or soup, because it is not, either according to our ideas, but a mixture *sui generis*.

whose spirits were rapidly rising, as, having once more cast a glance at the torch, and seeing it unchanged, he ventured to rise, and peep into what was now the object of his anxiety.

“ And that is true, too ! ” replied the soldier. “ For bravery in my day, I will yield to no one—and no one dare ask me to yield to him on that score—but, for the rest, oh, Fra Bonafazio, I have led a wild, wild life,” and he covered his eyes with his rigid, horny hand ; “ and now that old age has touched the nerves, Fra Bonafazio, I have a mind to change my life. I know all that we have seen here is only some of Ghino’s tricks, at which I have often laughed ; but—somehow—I feel—I feel that what man can do, God can do—and more—or devils ! Oh, friar, I am frightened ! I—I—Torpé—Count Ugolino’s Torpé is—*frightened* ! Lord, Lord ! what is this ? Is this what they call *fear* ?—but not of man—no, no ! never *that* !—of what then ? I don’t know, but I feel it ! and how can man feel what is not ;—oh, yes I am changed, and I *will* change my life : and now is a good time when I am no longer fit to follow the Count in his battles ; nor my head as well able to drink his health after them. Fra Bonafazio, you will undertake to help me, will

you not?—and then what a happy chance will be that which brought us here!"

"Hem! hem!" said the friar. "The loss may be little to you, if you make your soul by it; but unless Count Ugolino takes the same turn, he may think differently. As to *my* undertaking your conversion, however,—hem—hem—hem!—look ye, Torpé, I have never been a trooper, and in that way may seem better than I am to you, but there are those who think it would have been better if I had been. I have not, it is true, been stripped of my frock, but to let you into a secret, I have only just escaped it at different times, by the good luck of our prior being deep in politics; and wanting an agent that should not seem to be an agent; but as for undertaking a soul—I should like to be sure of my own first—but I will tell you what I can do for you, I can tell you one that will undertake it; and moreover, that would have power to draw you back out of the devil's clutches when he had you all but one little finger, one that makes one wish to be good, by seeing him so happy, and so indulgent to every one's failings except his own,—and that is Fra Tommaso, the confessor of Lady Bianca, the Count's grand-daughter. If we ever

leave this hole alive, and if, after seeing the bright daylight once more, you continue of the same mind, I will speak to him about you."

"But if we never *should* leave this hole alive?"

"Oh, Gesù! then we are both done for! *I*, indeed, could confess *you*—after a fashion—but who would do as much for *me*?"

"Yes, it is that I have thought of," said Torpé, answering to his own thoughts; "I think I should mind less making the rough of my confession of forty long years of wild soldiering to one like you, and then finishing it off, as we might say, to one like Father Tommaso."

"Thank you, Torpé,—but—hem—hem!—as I said before, I have not confessed many—and never a wild soldier—so, at any rate, let us take some refreshment first, for here, I assure you, is where-withal to do so, and we shall see how we may feel afterwards," and he pointed to that which now proved to be a not inconvenient little machine for carrying food and drink, a sort of portable larder and cellar on a diminutive scale, convenient for the pranks of Soldanieri, and he proceeded to taste the food, which he pronounced so palatable, that Torpé, though thoroughly subdued in spirit, consented at last to take his

share. The ceremony of drinking-glasses had been omitted in serving their unwonted table; but to persons who had undergone so much, this seemed but a slight privation, and rather served as an excuse for applying more frequently to the flask; which, containing wine of a superior quality, soon began to produce the usual effect upon their spirits. Under its influence, they learned to laugh at their supernatural terrors, and had no longer any doubt of their being in the hands of the band of Ghino di Tacco.

"If it be so," said the friar, "I am safe, for he respects the cloth; but I would not say as much for you, Torpé, the serving-man of the Guelphic Count Ugolino."

"He is no Guelph," stoutly retorted Torpé; "he was always known as of a Ghibeline family and chief—"

"Till of late."

"No, always—always—always—and—"

"And if he be so, and you follow his steps against the Pope, what becomes of your new-found soul? Ah, Torpé, Torpé! the time is come for you to decide between body and soul,—between this world and the next. I cannot con-

fess you, my son, until you have made your choice ! Confess to Ghino that you are become an adherent of those that killed his father, and I will do my best to prepare you for the consequence ; if, on the contrary, you are relapsed into Ghibelinism, anathema, &c.,—which will you decide on, Torpé ? ”

“ I will think about it,” was the answer ; “ and in order to do so the more calmly I will stretch myself on the bench, for I feel the close air of this room begin to affect my head.”

“ And mine also, though more seasoned, that is, more accustomed to the confined air of our cells, begins to feel the effects of it . . . or of the fatigue . . . that wine was a *bijou*, Torpé ! ” But the worn-out faculties of the old veteran were already in the land of dreams ; and the friar, finding that Torpé’s last application of the flask to his lips had been conclusive, gave a sigh to the weakness of human nature, in which, to do him justice, unlike most who do so, he included himself, and approaching the couch, with a movement that partook more of the decisive than of the gentle, he made room for himself beside his companion, and they were both soon wrapped in the profoundest slumber.

CHAPTER II.

How long they had continued so history does not record, when the frate feeling himself shaken so roughly that he rolled to the ground from his narrow couch, opened his eyes and once more hastily covering them with both hands, uttered such a roar as had the chamber not been isolated purposely to avoid all such unpleasant remembrances from intruding on privileged ears, must have called the whole fraternity about him. Torpé, of course, started even from his drunken sleep ; and, seeing the cause of the frate's alarm, re-echoed the shriek, and rolled down also over him, and buried his face in the folds of the ample cloak. The cause of this ludicrous scene was the sudden and unexpected appearance of the hideous dwarf, whom the reader may remember to have excited the compassion of Bianca the morning when Ugolino set out upon his ill-omened voyage to meet the Genoese. To have

seen this unfortunate being once, and to have forgotten him were an impossibility ; and therefore Fra Bonafazio's terror at the moment proceeded solely from his appearance at such an hour, in such a place, and in such a manner, while Torpé's was the effect of nervous sympathy. The poor dwarf in the meantime stood by, apparently waiting until their imbecile terror should have exhausted itself. After some time the friar ventured to look up ; but as if unable to endure the sight of the hideous face, rendered still more ghastly by the gleams of a rude lamp which the dwarf held in his hand, he again closed his eyes in silence. At last the dwarf's patience became exhausted.

“Have done,” he said, “with this foolery—it is unworthy of the manhood of which you are so vainglorious. My business is pressing, and more than all our lives are worth may be at stake by the discovery of my visit.”

The friar once more looked up and then the dwarf presented to his astonished eyes the ring which Bianca had entrusted to him to present at the shrine of the Madonna, and which he had sewed with the florins into the saddle previous to setting out upon his journey. Starting from

the floor at the sight, he seized the dwarf's hand as if to wrench it from him ; but desisted when, with the most determined coolness, and without attempting resistance, the latter said—

“Take it, and your own lives as well as mine, with whatever else may be involved, are the forfeit. Listen to me calmly—silently—rationally—and all, even your ducats, may be saved.”

Torpé, on hearing these words, sat up also, and exhorted the friar to attention.

“This ring,” the dwarf pursued, “in consequence of the rough examination your saddle has undergone, fell from it as it was being carried to the treasure-room, where all awaits the return of our chief now absent. For, I suppose I need scarcely tell you that you are prisoners in the castle of the Soldanieri—nor need I add that I am of his band.”

“In what capacity ?” hastily inquired Torpé.

“Till of late, in that of obeying the will of the wicked,” the dwarf meekly answered ; “since a heavenly vision was vouchsafed to me, in that of disobeying it,—but it is not of myself that I would speak as yet, though a few words, before parting, I must say. I was about to tell you that as I followed the man who carried the

saddle this ring fell to the ground : unperceived by him I took it up, and recognised it as one which I have seen upon a hand that I was unworthy to look upon. I hid it and watched my opportunity to come and ask if it came into your possession with her consent."

"Base dwarf ! Do you not see my — no, this is not my friar's frock ; but methinks you may recognise my sacred profession without that."

"I recognised you," the dwarf replied, "from the first, and for that I am here. You are he whom *she* called to my assistance upon the fourth of last August."

"Methinks, then, you might have spared your insulting question ; but I suppose you think all are like yourself."

"I understand, then, that you are her messenger."

Torpé laid hold of the friar's arm to awaken his apprehension of the hope that gleamed, but the friar had already perceived it—

"Surely," he said, "I am her messenger. She is going to be married. What ails the fool ? Hold the lamp steadily or we shall all be left in darkness again, for it seems the devil puffed out his own when we went to sleep. I hope he will

have the gentility to light it for us in the morning. As I was saying, the Lady Bianca is going to be married, and sent me with this ring to propitiate the Virgin to give them luck."

"But there is much treasure in your saddle—we had orders to look particularly to it."

"Have they opened it?"

"No—because the amount is unknown."

"Pooh! some ducats that the old Count and her brother made her a present of, and which she was sending by me to a friend at Florence to purchase some gewgaws for the occasion. What do you writhe like an eel for? Again I say, hold the lamp steadily, or give it to me."

"Hear me!" said the dwarf; but, notwithstanding the friar's exhortations, his voice was hoarsely tremulous. "Your saddle shall be safely restored to you—at least, I mean, that which it contains—when, I cannot tell; for it is not in my power to release yourselves!" As may be supposed, both the anxious listeners started and looked in blank dismay at this announcement. "Nay, fear nothing," he said, "Ghino our chief is not cruel for cruelty sake, though he values human life little in comparison with his own commands. He will release you the moment he

arrives, but none of his subordinates have power to do so. Your money — *her* money, however, would be lost ; her happiness—her wedding happiness might be less perfect—her adorable charms less fully decked — for her bridegroom — that must not be — ha ! ha ! ” and the poor defective being seemed to lose himself in a sort of abstracted maze of enthusiasm. The friar and Torpé looked at each other, and the former was about to speak, when the dwarf, putting out his hand, as if not to be interrupted, continued : — “ The money shall be returned to you untouched — with this ring. I do not give it to you now, because you will be searched ; but the day you leave this, go to the Convent of the Carmelites, which is a few miles further on towards Florence. There is an old yew hedge just inside the gate : in that hedge, at the distance of about two arms’ length from the gate, you will find your treasure. And now, will you promise to do a behest for me ? ”

“ If it be in our power, surely, or in that of him — I would say of her, to whom the treasure belongs.”

The dwarf’s hand was again authoritatively extended.

"From *him*, nothing—from *his bride*, nothing! but from *you* thus much—that you will tell her—not because *she* could care, but for my own consolation—that the wretched outcast of humanity, who never knew the extent of his deformity until he saw her charms, owed to her a double life—that of soul and body. Carried hither by a frail mother, in childhood, he knew no principles except the laws of this fraternity, until four days spent in her atmosphere, and that of the holy man whom she called to visit him, let a flood of light into his benighted soul. He returned hither, for he had no where else to go; but it was not to continue in a course of sin, but to counteract it as far as his miserable power might extend. He has done so—but he has only drawn upon himself the derision and sometimes the suspicion of those around him, which, perhaps, have not been carried farther only from their believing the mind of the poor dwarf as diminutive and as weak as his body; for they know little and think less of the even-handed justice of God—as little as I did myself until *she* consoled me for my outward deformity—when I noticed the horror with which she suffered me even to touch her hand," and the poor

being with heroic fortitude pronounced the words unflinchingly — “by telling me that God seldom bestows the advantages of mind and person equally ; and that if I looked into my own soul I might discover his gifts and grace where I had not yet sought for or suspected them to be. And although she stood there, herself a contradiction to her own doctrine, when I said so to the good priest, he explained to me that God, for reasons unknown to us — unless it be to teach us his power — makes exceptions to every rule, and that the perfect in mind and body, like *her*, are, like deformed idiots, some of these exceptions. Tell her I have sought out my latent powers, my moral force — I repeat her words — and the proof I offer her of it is, that I joyfully risk the life her angelic humanity saved, to do her a slight service. Yes ! since you have spoken I feel the sacrifice, if required, will be a light one. I say, if required, for all depends upon Tacco’s suspecting me or not. I know she would rather I should be able to say that I risk my life to do an act of justice ; but I cannot, for it would be false, and to her I will not lie. I *would* — now I would do it for justice sake, but I *do* it for hers ; and I ask my reward — which

is, that she spends two of those golden ducats in masses for the soul of him who dies for her. Farewell ! ” and before either the friar or Torpé could collect their intellects, scared by an harangue of which they understood but little and believed still less, the dwarf was gone, the door of their prison closed, and themselves once more in perfect darkness.

“ Torpé ! ”

“ Fra Bonafazio ! What do you think now ? ”

“ What do *you* think ? ”

“ That is what I want to know ! Who ever thought there were beings like that in this world —if we be in this world after all ? ”

“ Oh, I have heard of such in my travels ; but never to say knew one of them before.”

“ And what are they ? — for that one seems something above and below human nature.”

“ And they are—a kind of spirits, I believe.”

“ Oh, not spirits, with that enormous head.”

“ Not just spirits—but they *are* worshipped in some countries!* Be he what he will, he has brought us good news.”

* As far as my experience goes dwarfs, and, indeed, all kinds of deformity, are of comparatively very rare occurrence in Italy.

"If it be true. But what was all that about his life?"

"I did not understand it either; all that I understood rightly was that Ghino will be sure to let us out, and that we shall find the money safe in the yew hedge."

"And that was all I understood either!" and in the satisfactory prospect they composed themselves once more to sleep, and did not waken until the door opened on the following morning, and a sufficient portion of tolerably good food, with a fresh lamp, was again placed in silence for their acceptance by the same friendly goblin, which, although they no longer feared, they did *not* dare to question, lest by so doing they might derange the dwarf's plan.

Another day past over with little variation for them, and they began to fear that the dwarf had held out false hopes, when on the morning of the third of their imprisonment they were summoned to the presence of the chief, who had arrived the day before, but had been too much occupied to attend sooner to their affairs. After being scrupulously searched, as the dwarf had predicted to them, they were conducted up what they supposed to be the stairs down

which they had both been carried two days before, and, after passing through several rooms of antique, gloomy, and neglected grandeur, they entered one somewhat more comfortable in appearance; and there, standing upright before them, surrounded by three or four of his principal officers or assistants, they beheld, for the first time, the renowned and dreaded Ghino di Tacco, whom they recognized at once by his gigantic stature, and such attempts as had been made even in that age of defective painting at giving likenesses and descriptions of him for public caution. He was far from unpleasing in his appearance; for, mingled with daring and decision, of which his whole life was a proof, there was a joyous, laughing, expression in his rather fair countenance, which at once awakened the hope of being able to conciliate him. At present, however, that expression was somewhat clouded; and as Torpé and the friar, the latter still wrapped in the military cloak, appeared before him, it grew darker still, and, to their humble salutation he scarcely vouchsafed an acknowledging nod.

"Where is the treasure which was in your saddle?" were the first words he uttered; and

the terror of the friar was so unaffected, that it passed extremely well for astonishment with one who had already come to his own decision upon the subject. He did not even wait for an answer, when he pursued, rather for form's sake than otherwise, “Have you had communication with any of my people since you have been here ?”

They were emulous of each other in answering “No!” gratuitously adding, “The light of heaven has never shone upon us, nor human being darkened, or I would say, lightened our prison door !”

“How !” exclaimed the robber; “do you dare to lie ?—if so, there may be more in this than I supposed. Have you not had food regularly administered to you ?”

“Yes, but not by any one that could belong to your excellency.”

“How so ?—why ?”

“Because it was always brought by devils, may it please you,” the friar answered solemnly.

Tacco passed his hand over his face, and resumed in a less serious tone,

“And yet you ventured to eat ?”

“We ate, please your excellency, in order to preserve life until we could prepare to die. With such a motive, we reasoned that, even the devil's

food could not harm us, as it is not that which entereth into a man, &c., as your excellency knows better than I do."

"Why do I know it better?"

"Hem—hem!—why, they say much comes into your excellency's possession."

"Go to, you knave! Are you not afraid of me?"

"No!" said the friar, while the military cloak alone prevented the palpitation of his heart from becoming visible, as much, however, at his own audacity as at the robber's aspect.

"Do you not know that the prize I expected with you has disappeared, and that if I acted according to—to—to my profession—Go to! I should hang you both from yonder tree?"

The friar changed the foot which had chiefly supported him, and drew the cloak more amply over his breast.

"Luckily for you," the robber resumed, "it was not your own; and I believe you both too cowardly to risk a finger, from what I have heard, for your employer's property; add to this, the delinquent has confessed his guilt, but without making restitution; and for this he swings instead of you!" and the eyes of the friar, involun-

tarily following the pointing finger of the giant, the horrible sight of the poor dwarf's lifeless body swinging in the wind, not twenty paces from the window, met his eyes.

The sight was too much for his already terrified sensations, and once more he would have swooned, had not timely remedies been applied to prevent it.

“Away !” the robber exclaimed, when he saw him sufficiently recovered ; “away, both of you ! for you are not grist for my mill. Say each of you to your employers, that I know no politics, and that I shall hold the Ghibeline party indebted to me for the Guelphic prize I have now lost. So your chief friar need bear me no malice. As for yonder carcase, let it not haunt your dreams. For some weeks past he has been found failing in his duties, and has been promised that which has now been paid him. Here, one of you ! let a military cloak no longer cover a craven heart ; give him his friar’s frock, bandage both their eyes, and set them loose upon the high road !”

It is scarcely necessary to say that the pair submitted, not only in humble, but in grateful silence ; nor was another word exchanged until

they found themselves on the part of the road where they had been captured three days before; and they were recommended to make the best of their way to the Convent of the Carmelites. Neither is it necessary to say that this order was implicitly obeyed; and when they found a sack containing every ducat they had believed lost, and the ring which had been the cause of its restoration, the friar could not repress a tear, as he now understood the devotion of the poor dwarf, and recollect ed his lifeless form upon the tree.

The old soldier's harder nature was less moved, and in his joy at the prospect of calming the fury of his imperious master by the sight of the recovered treasure he even made some attempt at ridiculing his companion. But the friar would not hear it.

"If you had seen him as I saw him," he said, "for you know I was between you and the window, you would not so readily forget it, for, though he had been dead since the day before, he raised his hands to me, and made them into a cross, no doubt to remind me of the masses; and they shall be said for him to the full value, if I said them myself for nothing—only that

then his poor soul would lose the value of the charity."

So saying the friar slung the bag of ducats to the cord that bound his waist, and covered it with his travelling cloak ; and, wearied and fatigued, but without further adventure, they arrived in Florence two days after, in the manner we have seen. By the time that Bonafazio returned to the Count's apartments he found him waiting in the utmost impatience for his return : he having, in the meantime, received a notice requesting him to attend a council, which, in consequence of the news of his convalescence, had been summoned *all'improvviso*, in order to arrange the final articles of the peace, before the Genoese or Lucchese hearing of it, should come to reproach Florence with her breach of faith, thereby probably throwing all into confusion again. Ugolino would gladly have absented himself from this meeting, now that he had, once more, as he believed, the means of purchasing the Priori in his hands ; but that requiring some time and more management, and he having announced his convalescence when, as he thought, there was no longer any hope, he feared to excite suspicion by again declining to attend it. Con-

cealing the Vernaccia then in a safe place with the recovered ducats, and once more leaving the poor frate without hearing his adventures, he went forth, with a far lighter heart, however, than when he had left his apartments in the morning. And now, again, at that council-board, did he give a sample of such talents as almost make us think that vice, in those who are so gifted, must be an organic disease—a periodical insanity—for, turning their talents to good account, what might not they achieve, as well for others as for their possessor ? There were present the six Priori, and several others of the minor authorities, besides a few of the noble citizens, whose voices in council had weight even before putting any matter to the vote. The chief point of discussion was the throwing open the Porto Pisano for the Florentine merchandise and here it was that Ugolino contrived to impede the signing of the treaty of peace, on which not only the prosperity but the very existence of the Pisan republic depended : at the same time that he gave to all the impression that it was his love and anxiety for that republic which induced him to throw such difficulties in the way of the guarantee that he himself had taught the Priori

to insist on, as caused the council to break up in stormy words that seemed to threaten the failure of the whole affair. He returned to the convent, and conversed, or rather suffered the worthy prior to hold forth for some time upon the unreasonableness of the Priori in requiring such strict guarantee, and refusing such a code of tariff as he had suggested ; and this time Ugolino was sufficiently hopeful to act the part of despair without difficulty. At last he pleaded fatigue, and having once more refused all engagements for the evening he retired to his apartments, and then fulfilled his double promise to the friar, that of hearing his adventures, and rewarding him in bright gold.

The recital had not been long finished, adorned as it considerably was, by the friar's imagination, when the Count was informed that one of the Priori requested to be permitted to see him for a moment.

“ *One?* ” asked the Count, almost, for the first time, unable wholly to repress a chuckling smile.

“ Yes, my lord, one,— Il Signore Michelini ; and he even inquired if I was quite sure that there were none of the others with your lordship.”

"Shew him up, by all means," said the Count, "and let us not be interrupted upon any pretext."

And here we shall close the door upon them, for that interview was too confidential even for our pages ; history, itself, leaves it wrapt in mystery, and not giving us even the details of the treaty between the two republics, leaves us only to infer them from the consequences. Suffice it, then, to say, that on the morning next but one after that interview, Fra Bonafazio was observed to pass out from, and return to, the convent of Santa Maria Novella much oftener, in a short space of time, than he was in the habit of doing, and to Torpé's inquiries he gave some laughing answer, which at least served the purpose of making him understand he was to hear no more. Not so easily satisfied, however, was another, who had for some time been secretly observing him.

As he issued forth upon the third of these mysterious visits, beginning to look about him with a sort of consciousness that they might be growing remarkable, he was not at all delighted to recognise Sattarello at a little distance, although advancing towards him, appa-

rently so lost in thought, that the friar began to hope he might possibly pass him unobserved. Delusive, however, proved that hope ; for, no sooner were they within a pace of each other, and Bonafazio trying to pass noiselessly by, than Sattarello, without having raised his eyes, but recognising, as it would seem, his friend's sandals, suddenly threw up his head, and, with an exclamation of such unusual delight, as could only be accounted for by their meeting in, what was then, a foreign country, flung his arms round him, and pressed him so closely to his heart, that, at the same moment, a crash was heard, a flood of gold flowed upon the street, and Bonafazio almost shared the fate of our Duke of Clarence, who was drowned in wine ! Sattarello's exclamations of surprise and sorrow may be imagined ; and he immediately set about collecting the scattered gold ; nor, between the unusual nature of the coin, which would have rendered theft dangerous, and the few persons who happened to be passing at the moment, without any better compliments to the honesty of the citizens, did they fail to pick up one thousand ducats, which the terrified friar confessed was the sum he ought to have.

"But the wine ! the Vernaccia," he exclaimed, dolefully.

"Vernaccia, was it ?" asked Sattarello ; "Ah ! I saw it was wine, but did not know of what kind ; but you are right,—it is the best to conceal gold."

Fra Bonafazio had recourse to the usual question on a detection : "What do you mean ?" he asked.

"Never mind, for the present,—only listen to me ;—liberal as the world is to friars, it will hardly tolerate one walking the streets bathed in wine,—so go to the far side of Lung' Arno, there, where the sun is shining so bright, that all shun it, and you will find the double advantage of hiding yourself and drying your frock, while I run to the next vintner's, and bring you another flask of Vernaccia."

The friar, who had scarcely yet recovered his scared intellects, looked inquiringly at the speaker.

"Are you serious or not ?" he asked ; "could you be serious for once, Sattarello, and do me a service to save my life ?"

"The service you mean, I will do you; but whether it be to save or hurt you, I will not take

upon my conscience ; and mind, I tell you so ! ” said Sattarello, in his newly-awakened scrupulosity ; “ so I will leave you as I found you.”

“ Then I will wait for you on the Lung’ Arno.”

“ Do so ; ” and they parted ; and Sattarello, faithfully keeping his promise, returned with the flask of Vernaccia in as short a time as was possible. “ And now I will help you to put the ducats into it,” he said.

“ What, what do you mean ? ” gasped the friar, more terrified than before.

“ I mean, that the deeper the Vernaccia is coloured, the better it is for those who are to drink it, that’s all. Come ! make haste, or you will be late ! See, I have brought the flask open on purpose.”

“ Sattarello ! ” said the friar, solemnly, between wrath and alarm, “ you will come to a bad end, and I have long said it.”

“ No ! for you see at least I repair the mischief I do ; see if you will be able to say as much. But good-bye ; if you will not allow me to help you, I will not detain you longer, as you know you have three other visits to pay, after this one ! ” and, for the third time, applying his thumb to the tip of his nose, he disappeared.

For a moment, the friar debated with himself, whether or not to return to the Count, and frankly relate what had happened ; but the Count was a man from whose atmosphere frankness “withering, fled,” and although the friar had actually walked towards the convent while debating the question with himself, he no sooner came in sight of it, and pictured the reception he should, in all probability, meet with, than turning back, he almost ran and deposited the flask at its destination, as if to remove temptation from his path ; which destination the reader will have understood to be to one of the Priori, each having agreed to accept a similar present,* in virtue of which, with a few castles conceded by Pisa to Florence, Count Ugolino was promised, and guaranteed on security somewhat similar to that which satisfied Sattarello from the Ghibeline chiefs, namely, that the Priori’s own honour and reputation being involved, that

* The contrivance of sending a bribe of a thousand ducats in a flask of Vernaccia to each of the Priori, however clumsy it may seem, rests not upon one or two historical authorities only ; and, as the particulars of the treaty finally signed on that occasion have not come down to us, we can only infer, from the consequences that ensued, what they must, in all probability at least, have been.

the two posts of Podestà and Capitano del Popolo, which, in fact, constituted sovereignty, without its name, should be rendered permanent in his person, by the assistance which, when necessary they bound themselves to afford him, contrary to the existing laws of his country ; and, in return, after a few more mock councils, and a few more difficulties, set up by Ugolino, in order to give his gulls the pleasure of demolishing them, the Porto Pisano was henceforth declared open to the Florentines upon their own terms. In this, as in all else, Ugolino showed his genius to be in advance of his age ; for while in the low state in which the science now called political economy then was, this appeared to be an immense concession, he knew that he was thereby insuring an advantage to the republic, which he now looked upon almost as his purchased property, not only by the spur which emulation always proves to industry, but by the opening once more to the Pisans, of the great, convenient, and influential market of Florence, hitherto, of course, closed against them in retaliation ; while by the re-incorporation of the mercantile interests of the two cities he was building his own influence on the firmest basis.

These matters concluded to his satisfaction, and anxious to find himself re-installed in his high posts at home, and to have the marriage between his grand-daughter and the Archbishop's nephew celebrated before the Pope's intentions in favour of Pisa should be made public, he delayed only to make a few necessary visits of ceremony and thanks previous to setting out on his return ; and amongst these was one to the school of Brunetto Latini, who, in his character of notary, had drawn up, and caused to be signed, the *public* articles of the agreement between Florence and Pisa. He found his distinguished pupil, as usual, at his side.

It has been said that no one who deserved posthumous fame was ever insensible to the hope of it ; and whether it was that hope in Ugolino, or whether it was the sort of threat of speaking the truth of all men, which Dante had uttered in his presence, that weighed upon his mind, there seemed to be some mysterious attraction between him and that bestower of *mortal immortality*. He caught the young man's hand between both his as he uttered his adieu.

“ Do not forget me,” he said, with strange and almost deprecatory emphasis. “ You are one of

those who not only can remember, but who can make one be remembered ! ”

“ I promise you ! ” was the unconsciously-proud answer of genius ; “ your *image* is already *here*, ” laying his hand on his heart, “ but your memory will require a wider sarcophagus, and it shall have it ! ” and Ugolino turned away in emotion.

Mysterious spark of genius, that recognises its kin even under appearances almost opposite ! and which is yet so limited — so corrupted, or rather not corrupted but encumbered by superinduced earthy matter, as the purest ore is by dross, as sometimes to mistake its own course, aim, and object ! Why did Ugolino wish Dante to give his memory to the world through all ages ? — and why did Dante promise to do so, in a tone and with a manner that deceived ? I believe *both*. Yes — for besides that a young, enthusiastic, and real poet *could not be false*, Dante was then a Guelph ; and if Ugolino would rather have been forgotten than remembered, only as Dante has given him to the memory, we know that the awful episode was not written until mature years and changed principles had modified the enthusiasm of youthful feelings.

There was, indeed, at that moment everything to dazzle the outward senses in Ugolino's circumstances and position ; nor can we wonder if this induced himself to refuse to turn his eye inwards, in order to learn that what others supposed providential success, was really that knowledge of good and evil prohibited to man, because of his proneness to choose the latter. An instance of this was, that the very day Ugolino arrived at Pisa, Jacopo, Bishop of Florence, returned from Rome, whither he had been summoned shortly before, with orders to exhort, and, if exhortations should fail, to compel the Florentines to withdraw from the iniquitous league and to make peace with Pisa !

On the self-same day arrived an Envoy-Extraordinary from Genoa, to ask the meaning of the strange rumours which had reached them of the arrangement made between these two republics. Ugolino had foreseen the latter inquiry, and left the answer ready with the Priori.

“ On what pretext,” the envoy asked, “ was a league broken, which it had been sworn was to be maintained for twenty-five years ? ”

“ For twenty-five years after the commence-

ment of the war," replied the Florentines ; "but it has not yet begun."

"And whose fault is that?" asked the Genoese.

"The Pope's," was the laconic reply ; and the envoy was obliged to return as he came.

When Montefeltro, in his exile, heard of these things, he reproached his astrologer for his false predictions, asking him what was now wanting to complete Ugolino's destiny ?

"The wrath of God," was the reply — and it came !

In the mean time, while he is pursuing his way to Pisa, it will be well to take a glance at what happened there in his absence.

CHAPTER III.

THE youthful reader will perhaps remember the good understanding in which Bianca and Ubaldino parted on the evening of the public funerals. The next morning Ubaldino called at an early hour at the house of the Visconti ; but there, to his great disappointment, he learned that Bianca had caught cold the evening before, and, having passed a feverish night, in the morning exhibited symptoms of so severe an affection of the chest as had induced her physician to prohibit her leaving her bed.

For two or three succeeding days, the answers to all inquiries were not more consolatory ; and during that time, Ubaldino had faithfully abstained from returning to visit Genivra ; or rather, to speak more correctly, chance not having thrown her in his way, his plastic feelings yet retained the last impression to which they had been subjected.

On the fourth day, however, Bianca's adverse star began to rise again. She continued seriously though not alarmingly indisposed ; and Ubaldino was returning after making his inquiries, a little impatient at the sudden cessation of the great excitement in which he had lived of late, when, turning the corner of a street, he encountered Lancia, with Genivra leaning on his arm. The beauty of the latter took yet a deeper glow, as their eyes met thus unexpectedly ; and when, instead of the quiet, though perhaps somewhat cool, salute, which an ordinary well-bred young lady would have given under similar circumstances, this spoiled child of Nature, having pouted her exquisite nether-lip, and thrown a corresponding glance into her unrivalled eyes, turned her head abruptly away, instead of returning his, his heart gave a bound, which once more made the image of the gentle Bianca totter on its pedestal. And when her uncle said, “Genivra ! Genivra ! why do you not speak to the Count Ubaldino ?” and she replied, “The Count Ubaldino does not care about my not speaking to him,” he felt that one moment more and it would fall, and its place be again usurped by that of her extraordinary and, to him, irresistible rival.

That moment, however, he resolutely told himself should not come ; and, without uttering a word, and merely again saluting her, he actually turned away, and had already made some steps from them, when he heard his name called by Genivra's voice. There was no longer time to think ; at a bound he was by her side.

"We are to have a *trovatore* this evening," she said abruptly, in a tone half sullen, half playful, and turned away with an air that forbade reply.

To our sorrow and shame, however, we are obliged to record that she was only too well justified in supposing that she should be understood, when that evening, at the earliest hour that the rules of society admitted of, Ubaldino presented himself in Lancia's saloons, where, sometime after, arrived the Count Lanfranco, and, under his escort, the Troubadour who had arrived the day before in Pisa, with letters of recommendation to a few of the chief families, declaring him a specimen worthy of notice, of that extraordinary profession, or class, or whatever it should be called, which, although already for some time known and valued in France, had not hitherto appeared in that part of Italy. Nor

might it perhaps be uninteresting to analyze the causes of this transmigration, as it were, of some peculiar faculty or talent, in different ages, not only from one individual or race of individuals, but from one country to another. No doubt, I believe, exists of the Trovatori or Troubadours having not only originated but flourished in France, considerably before they were known in Italy; and yet for how many ages has Italy been recognized by the world as almost the sole mother of Improvisatori and the queen of song!

The person who was now presented to the society of Pisa as a member of the joyous science, was somewhat above thirty years of age; but possessed of beauty so remarkable, and of that style of fair and florid colouring, with golden ringlets flowing upon his shoulders, uncommon then in southern Europe, that the most practised eye would not have assigned him within six or seven years of that age: his slight and elegant form, scarcely rising to the middle height, and the very nature of his profession, were calculated to add considerably to the delusion.

As he now advanced up the large saloon, Genivra, in her character of lady of the house went

forward to receive him and offer him her compliments ; but, scarcely had she approached near enough to observe him distinctly, than stopping short she appeared to have lost the power or the will to move, and stood perfectly still until he came up and addressed her with the air of polished gallantry, which became one who had been duly admitted a votary in the court of love and beauty. The veriest Neophyte could not have mistaken the smile of amazed, delighted admiration with which she received them ; and Buonconte and Ubaldino, who were both near her at the moment, felt their blood run cold as the instinct and sympathy of true love whispered to them that the idol they had so ardently worshipped was about to feel it for the first time, and for another ! Lancia himself hastened towards his niece, and drew the Troubadour away, under the pretext of presenting him to the company ; but if, in doing so, he hoped to give his niece a hint to recollect herself, he failed egregiously ; for she, during the whole process, never for one instant detached her eyes from the stranger's person and movements ; and when he opened his lips with a certain degree of foreign accent, and speaking Italian imperfectly, she listened with

the open, eager, fixed curiosity and attention with which one might listen to the warbling of some unknown but exquisite bird. It need scarcely be said that the courtier of love and beauty was not unconscious of this sudden enthusiasm, wakened by his appearance in the most beautiful creature whom even he had ever seen ; and no sooner were the first introductory ceremonies concluded than he returned to her with an air of respectful devotion, while she, like one irresistibly determined to precipitate her own doom, without giving him time to speak, exclaimed—

“ You are a poet—I have never heard poetry recited—when will you begin ? ”

The Troubadour smiled as he replied,—

“ If I had yielded to my inspiration I should have begun on entering this apartment.”

“ Oh, and why did you not ? I die with impatience to hear you ! You are so . . . ” (beautiful she would have said, and she might nearly as well have uttered what her eyes so clearly expressed, but she had so much propriety as to substitute the words) . . . “ so like a poet.”

“ I thought you said you had never seen one ? ” he almost whispered.

Genivra's eyes danced, and her heart thrilled at the first low tone that had ever found its sympathetic chord in her heart.

"But I know now what a poet ought to be!" was her reply.

"While I for the first time feel myself no longer to be one."

"Why! why! oh, why do you say so?" she anxiously, childishly exclaimed.

"Because the soul of poetry is fiction and exaggeration. I feel that I never again can feign or exaggerate what I now experience."

"Oh, how beautiful! how delightful! This, this is poetry, I know," exclaimed the child of nature; and as it is not always the man most satiated by the world's parrot-like or echoed praise, who is most insensible to that which springs from the untutored soul, especially of youth and beauty, it is not easy to say how long this half-whispered harmony of sweet sounds might have lasted, to the exclusion of all others, had not Buonconte, in his character of inmate of the family ventured to point out to Lancia that the company was beginning to be impatient at the entire devotion of Genivra to the stranger. Lancia took the hint at once; and advancing to the pair politely

inquired whether it would not be possible to persuade the Troubadour to sing.

"He is singing, uncle!—that is, I mean . . . oh, do not interrupt us!" exclaimed Genivra unconsciously, throwing her whole soul into her supplication.

Her uncle felt but the more how necessary it was to do so.

"You must not be so selfish, my child," he said: "remember you are in your own house—you must at least allow your guests to share in your enjoyment."

And as the man of the world read more in the old man's pertinacity than did the wilful and inexperienced girl, he hastened to profess his readiness to obey his commands or those of his company; and, while a servant was dispatched for his psaltery, he moved through the apartment endeavouring to enter into conversation now with one, now with another, with such address as might have become the votary of courts less ideal than those to which alone he professed allegiance.

No sooner did the servant reappear, bearing the psaltery in his hand, than Genivra, whose eyes had, in the mean time, only wandered from the Troubadour to be turned anxiously to the door,

sprang towards him, and seizing upon the instrument, would suffer no one but herself to present it to its gifted master. Sinking upon one knee, as was permitted in one of his calling, he received it from her hand, and, without changing his position, he ran his fingers over the chords for a moment, and then, selecting a slight accompaniment, in a voice of the most melodious intonation, regulated by the utmost skill which the state of the musical science then admitted of, he sang a few lines impromptu, which might be rendered thus :—

IMPROVISED.

The sudden flame that eyes can light,
Who knows not love may ridicule ;
Unworthy of the soft delight,
He only proves himself a fool.
Who 'gainst the fragrance of the rose,
Crossing his path, 'ere sleeps the moon,
His tranced senses seeks to close,
Because, forsooth, 'tis come too soon ?
Ah ! love is like a lightning spark,
Spurning every earthly rule,
And he who thinks its course to mark,
Doth only prove himself a fool.
Such am no I, nor will I be,
I bare my bosom to the dart,
Happier far to die by thee,
Than henceforth live without a heart.

It is impossible to convey an idea of Genivra's feelings while the Troubadour sang these lines, all simple, and according to our present ideas, tasteless as they were. His manner of uttering them, and the expression of his eyes, without doubt gave them zest and grace ; and that which all the rest of the company—two only excepted—looked upon as a mere tribute of gallantry to the beautiful young hostess, the inexperienced girl, guided by her wishes, received as a declaration of his sentiments for her. The effect of this conviction, however, was not exactly what might, from her previous manner, have been anticipated. During the first half-hour, in which surprise went at least for half in what she felt, she knew not, thought not, of the necessity of disguise ; but as the surprise began gradually to subside, and the practised looks and words of the Troubadour, unlike the two youths by whom she had been so devotedly loved, instructed her rather in what he wished to inspire, than in what he really felt himself, a sort of moral revulsion took place within her, and in the short time during which she listened to him singing, she might be said to have passed from the state of artless, unbroken childhood, into that of a young woman wakening to

a consciousness of her own sensations. Nor was the poet unheedful of the change ; on the contrary, when her uncle rejoiced, and others wondered at her faint applause of music that might have warmed a colder heart, he fixed his eyes upon hers for one moment, and when he saw them for the first time fall beneath that smilingly inquiring glance, he would not have heard her utter a word for the whole world. And now, instead of minutely describing the progress of a passion which partook of all the uncontrolled vehemence of her ardent nature, while the Troubadour, on pretence of cultivating the acquaintance of the Italian poets, and acquiring the true spirit of their language, lingered on in Pisa, we will record a conversation which took place between them not very many days after their first meeting, and leave the reader to draw his own inference. They were seated in an alcove in the garden belonging to Lancia's house ; and in that alcove there was a statue of that goddess who professed, at least, to be an enemy of the softer passions. Perhaps it was in poetical justice that the lovers now compelled her, in effigy, to act the ignoble part of a screen, while they sat for hours together, by the connivance of Genivra's waiting-woman, pouring

out their souls in harmony, when her poor old besotted relative believed her taking her *siesta*. On the particular day to which we have alluded, the Troubadour seemed not in his usual gay and joyous humour. On the contrary, his brow was careworn, his demeanour somewhat embarrassed, and his attempts at conversation unsuccessful.

An unprepossessed eye would, on this occasion, have assigned him, perhaps, the age he really had; but Genivra's eye was no longer unprepossessed, and by one of those instances of contrariety, or failures of sympathy which sometimes occur, between the fondest hearts, she felt herself so happy that she saw him and everything through that medium for some time. At last, however, his increasing abstraction, if not melancholy, became too apparent to escape her observation, and she immediately and impetuously inquired the cause of it. To do him justice, it was not without a very painful sensation on his part that he then exclaimed,—

“I do not deserve your love, Genivra; and I fear to look forward to what is to be its end!”

“It is to have no end,” she replied, with cool determination.

“Dearest, loveliest being!” and he turned

away unaffectedly distressed. "But, Genivra," he resumed, after a pause, "do you suppose your haughty high-born uncle would ever consent to give the treasure of his life to a foreign, nameless troubadour ?"

"I have given myself to you," was the reply ; "I am ready to follow you when and where you will."

"You have not said so to the Count Lancia ?" he asked, in some alarm.

"No ; but not from any other fear than that he would take secret measures to prevent me. Alfonso, let us go before he can think of doing so !" and he was again obliged to turn away from her brilliant, and no longer unexpressive eyes.

"Dearest," he said again, after a pause, and taking her hand, though without looking in her face, "did I not tell you that there were invincible obstacles to our marriage ?"

"I did not, and do not believe it. You have already told me that you are not married !"

"Alas ! Genivra, there are many obstacles besides marriage !"

"None ! nor should that be one did it exist !"

The Troubadour looked anxiously upon her.

"Oh, do not suppose me any longer a puny child!" she exclaimed; "every circumstance of my life has tended to make me different from other women,—I have been an orphan from my birth,—I have been reared in a harem,—I own but one duty paramount to my own wishes!"

"And what is that duty?" asked the Troubadour.

"To slay him who delivered my father and my grandfather to the slayer, and who was thereby the murderer also of my mother. To that, and to that alone, would I sacrifice even my love for you, were they incompatible; but happily they are not!"

As Genivra uttered these words, the confidante approached to tell them that Lancia was seeking for her, and the Troubadour started up to make his escape; but, ere he could effect it, Genivra, with an energy and decision which would not be baffled, seized his arm, and exclaimed,—

"You leave me miserable for the first time in my life! Swear to me by whatever can bind you that, at least, you will not leave me without my own consent, or I go this moment to my uncle, and at his feet I shall confess all."

"I swear," replied her lover, and he said so without difficulty, for the circumstances which then detained him in Pisa were not of a nature to be sacrificed, by a man of his character, to a girl's passion or despair.

In the meantime, the change which had come over Genivra's character, from the evening of her first meeting with the Troubadour, soon became perceptible, even to the most indifferent acquaintances. From the wild, petulant, and occasionally haughty girl, she became thoughtful, reserved, gentle, attentive, and polite to all; and the two young men, whom previously she had occasionally treated with impatient disgust, when interfering with her sportive or coquettish desire for new conquests, she now treated, with reserve indeed, but reserve mingled with such softness and consideration, in comparison with the past, as doubtless sprang from a wakening to a sense of the reality of what she hitherto had laughed at. As a preventive to love this might have been effectual; but advanced and indulged in, as theirs had already been, a change so graceful in itself, no matter whence its origin, did but rivet the chains for which it evinced compassion, and as neither Buonconte nor Ubaldino had any

idea of the rapidity with which her ardent passions, when finding congenial soil, sprang to maturity, each persuaded himself, at first, that her poetic fancy, as they wished to call it, would quickly yield to the obstacles in the way of a serious affection for a nameless troubadour, and that only so much of the superinduced softness would remain as should render her heart accessible to a love which each, of course, believed no other had ever so strongly felt before. Yes, such, at last, was the point to which the change in her character, aided by just so much of jealous anxiety as was the necessary consequence of that change, had now brought even Ubaldino.

It was not yet quite three weeks since he had attempted to pronounce to Bianca the vow which he must have looked upon as irrevocable, but, he had been accidentally prevented. He had not seen her in the mean time; for though convalescent, a debility and lassitude, which the physicians declared not accounted for by her cold, had, as yet, prevented her leaving her apartment,—and the circumstances above related had occurred! How long Ubaldino might have indulged in a delusion which required a lover's capability of

hoping, or what might have been the effects of his meeting Bianca again, ere fatally committed in honour as in feelings, it is hard to say, had not one of those incidents occurred, which, by proving how little man is master of his own destiny, ought at once to render us submissive to our own, and charitable in judging that of others.

CHAPTER IV.

It happened to be on the very day fortnight after Count Ugolino's departure for Florence, and the very evening of the day on which the preceding conversation had taken place between Genivra and the Troubadour, that when, as usual, some guests were assembled at Lancia's house, a habit which Genivra had instituted in order to give an excuse for the Troubadour's presence, the whole town was thrown into a state of alarm by the news that a party of Lucchese, horse and foot, were at the gate of the city leading to Lucca, and that it would be inevitably forced if additional defence were not immediately made.

The Lucchese had received intelligence of the treaty which the Florentines were about to enter into with Pisa, contrary to their agreement with them, and they determined upon a surprise, which the Pisans to this day speak of as dishonourable;

but which seems to me nothing more than one of those *ruses de guerre*, which have been sanctioned in all times and in all countries. Every one, of every rank, rushed to arms, and, although the attempt was, in the main object, unsuccessful, it was attended with one incident important to this story. That incident was, the capture of Ubaldino. He was, like a doomed one, hanging about Genivra, when the news of the attack was announced. He had never yet put on armour, as it had always been the secret aim of his uncle to prevent his doing so ; and, accordingly, now, the thought of his presence being necessary did not occur to him ; on the contrary, such is the force of habit, the first idea that did occur to him was, that if all the rest should go, Genivra would be left to him ! He soon perceived, however, that her thoughts were very different,—

“ You will not leave me alone ? ” she said, but it was to the Troubadour ; as, with a cheek which no one had ever seen blanched before, and trembling lips, she laid her hand upon his arm ; but the expression of her eyes showed that the alarm was not for herself.

“ No ! ” he replied with a smile, beneath which a slight degree of irony might have been per-

ceived by an unprejudiced observer ; “ it would not be becoming in my — *profession*.”

Ubaldino ground his teeth, and yet—Buonconte having already disappeared — he lingered, and ventured even to say—

“ Your body-guard will be as numerous as you will accept of.”

“ Which is to say it will consist of *one*,” she said determinately and without hesitation ; “ but he who values my *esteem* will defend me in defending his country.”

Ubaldino was seen, or, at least, observed no more by any one, until a shout arose outside the gates, where a smart action had taken place, that the Archbishop’s nephew, after fighting rather like a madman than a hero, was carried off by the retreating enemy ; and although they were ardently and instantly pursued for some distance, their better preparations and the fear of being led into ambush obliged the Pisans to give up, and Ubaldino was indeed conveyed away a prisoner of war, and prisoner to that state which was exasperated not only against his country, but against his Ghibeline family.

When the news of the attack reached Visconti, his first words were that it should not

be communicated to Bianca, who had that day, for the first time, been promised by her physician that, if equally well on the following, she should be allowed to leave her room and receive whom she pleased ; provided only, he added, smiling, she would promise to listen rather than to speak. She hastily raised her sweet eyes to his face at this condition, conscious as she was of not generally usurping much of any conversation, but, more hastily still, she cast them down again, while her lips irresistibly reflected the smile she had detected upon his ; and so much for the truth of presentiments, even in the most sympathetic nature. She slept a sweeter sleep, and had more hopeful visions that night, than she had had for a long time before.

Orders given that she should not be disturbed, Visconti and his relative, the deputy Capitano, rushed out, and both did their respective duties as brave and loyal citizens ; although there were not wanting those who believed that, to their grandfather, those duties would have been

“ More honoured in the breach than in the observance,”

People even went so far as to say, that Ugolino himself had instigated the attack of the Guelphic

Lucchese, in order to remove some more of the prying Ghibelines from his path ; but this, however fairly presumed from the preceding circumstances of his life, does not seem sufficiently authenticated, as far as I have been able to discover ; and if it were so, we must suppose that he depended on Ubaldino's hitherto inactive habits, and the respect for the Archbishop's position, to preserve them both from danger ; unless, indeed, we take a frightful peep further into the wicked windings of the human heart, which, being here unnecessary, it is pleasanter to avoid.

The news, however, which it was easy to conceal from Bianca for one night, it was necessary to impart to her the next morning, and then it was that the subdued lights of her harmonised character came out in beautiful relief. No eye saw her weep when Beatrice, not ungently, told her the cause of Ubaldino's failing in his diurnal visit ; nor did she feel herself turn almost to stone, as she did at the first doubt of his truthfulness. On the contrary, when Beatrice had related all, though grieved and disappointed almost more than she would have expected to have been, she felt a degree of comfort — almost of pride —

in thinking that the misfortune had occurred in the discharge of his duty ; and, softened by the feeling, and grateful to her sister for being less harsh than usual, she threw an arm round her neck, and with the most persuasive look and tone said—

“ Beatrice, will you pray with me for him ? ” and Beatrice, although not more given than was necessary, even for what is called decency, to religious exercises, could not refuse to kneel down and join in the prayers which Bianca offered up. Perhaps, with her quick and imperious temper, she would have found it more difficult to have done so had she known how matters had been between Ubaldino and Genivra ; but, since the disastrous news of the battle, the Archbishop had appeared so entirely changed, not only in spirits but in character, that, whatever courtesy he had previously conceded to her seductions, was now totally withdrawn ; and as Bianca’s illness no longer admitted of Ubaldino’s visits, there was little more intercourse between the families than what was absolutely necessary ; while the rumour which, as usual, the parties themselves were the last to hear, of Genivra’s admiration for the Troubadour, seemed to remove all apprehensions for

Ubaldino in that quarter ; and although, had Sattarello been at Pisa, Bianca might, through Adelaida, have learned more ; as he was not, she was suffered to enjoy the delusion which no doubt had tended not a little to her recovery.

Two days after the capture of Ubaldino, the Count della Gherardesca returned to Pisa ; and, even supposing the worst of his intentions or hopes, as matters had turned out, his displeasure and annoyance were unaffected. He hastened to the Archbishop, and if he found him infinitely colder and more sarcastic in manner than he had ever been before, he accounted for it to himself by his grief for the loss of his nephew. On that subject, however, he seemed disinclined to speak more than was absolutely necessary for the arrangement of plans for his recovery, by ransom or whatever other means might be necessary, as both were aware that, for such a prize to be ransomed by money only, would require more than it would be possible for the Archbishop to produce without the ruin of himself as well as of Ubaldino. When this subject had been discussed as long as the Archbishop would endure a discussion which promised not to lead to a permanent decision, notwithstanding the

most ample professions and promises on the part of Ugolino, the latter after waiting some time in silence, finding that the Archbishop started no other, said,

“Your eminence does not congratulate me on my successful mission to Florence.”

“I congratulate you, Count Ugolino,” was the strange, laconic reply.

“I trust you are satisfied with the terms, Monsignore. I flatter myself they are infinitely better than the Pisans had anticipated, when they sent me there with *carte blanche*.”

“When they did so, Count, they did not know of his holiness’s orders.”

It required Ugolino’s practised nerves not to start at this observation, made as if it involved no discovery, no deep importance; but even he slightly changed colour as he answered,

“They could not, Monsignore, know of what did not then exist.”

“Then the Prior of St. Dominick’s is not in such confidence as I supposed with the Court of Rome,” was the rejoinder.

And again the Count had to call upon his self-command.

“ The orders, if such exist (for I do not deny having, on my arrival hither, heard such a rumour), are certainly not issued yet.”

“ I know it,” interrupted the Archbishop.

“ And what ruin might not have overtaken Pisa in the meanwhile ?” The Archbishop bowed slightly as his only answer. “ The castles I have yielded are very inconsiderable.”

“ If they had been all.”

“ Oh, Monsignore ! as to the Porto Pisano, your eminence will hear how I stood out against it ; but when it came to a crisis between it and the peace—”

“ And did it, my Lord ?”

“ How, Monsignore ?” and, strange to say, that was the most difficult moment perhaps of Ugolino’s life. Concealment, deception, false appearances, treachery, all had been familiar to him ; but a direct lie, between man and man, had not yet, by chance, fallen to his lot ; and while there was still something either of talent, or of ingenuity, or of power over other minds, in each of the other branches of falsehood, to supply the slight excuse which man requires to fall, a direct lie he felt to be the last resource of weakness of intellect

as well as meanness of principle, implying fear, and inferiority ; and, for that reason, he had hitherto managed to avoid it, and felt now abashed and confounded by his position.

The Archbishop, requiring not this fresh proof of his guilt, did not pursue his advantage, but contented himself with saying,

“Enough, my lord ; what is done is done, be it for good or evil, and let us hope the best.”

“In the meantime I shall go and endeavour to console my poor Bianca, in whose name, as in my own, Monsignore, I repeat that, to whatever extent you may judge it judicious to apply her dower, you know we both consider it as Ubaldino’s.”

“Hah ! my lord Count ! that is friendly indeed ! You say you repeat the offer ; pardon me for not having sooner offered my warmest thanks ; I really had not understood it.”

“If I did not make it clear to your eminence, it must have been because it was so clear to me, that it seemed self-evident ; and now I shall take your permission to withdraw, for every moment seems an age, until I see my poor suffering child ;” and he retired, not so much in anxiety to visit Bianca however, as to inform himself how

far the people partook of the evident suspicions of the Archbishop.

Of this he was not long in doubt. The whisper had at last reached Pisa, not only of the Pope's intended bull, but some vague, mysterious, insinuations even about the attack from the Lucchese, were industriously spread, though no one knew by whom. These latter gained little ground indeed, on account of the capture of Ubaldino; but still, the idol once impugned, it was not easy to say where the analyzing process might stop; and Ugolino was painfully sensible of a great difference in the manner of his reception from what he had daringly anticipated.

Visconti, in the meantime, as deputy Podestà, had shone forth in a manner to surprise all who had only known of his gentler virtues; and particularly upon the occasion of the midnight attack, and its after consequences. His grief for Ubaldino on his own account, but infinitely more on account of Bianca, was extreme, although he felt with her, that it was joy in comparison to what had menaced the young man's own honour and the peace of all; and perhaps he, at least, felt that, under any circumstances, it was lighter than it would have been a couple of months

before : for though he knew not all, he was not as ignorant as was his wife of Ubaldino's constant visits to the house of Lancia. Persuading himself, however, on the strength of the strange rumours respecting Genivra and the Troubadour, that he only went for the sake of the novelty of the latter, as many of the youth of Pisa did, while exiled from the presence of Bianca, he had neither mentioned it to his wife nor allowed it to make much impression on himself ; and therefore, when he positively refused to allow any measures contrary to the law to be resorted to, for the recapture or release of Ubaldino, as some had, perhaps invidiously suggested to him, he was complimented for his public spirit and uprightness, in a manner that wakened the first surmise in his breast that he might yet become all his sister and he, in their infant years, had talked and planned about, but which his grandfather had, for many many years after, scouted into oblivion. The first symptom of this was his not immediately offering to resign the post he held as deputy on his grandfather's return ; and, stranger still, to those who did not know the secret, Ugolino forbore to compel him to it. This forbearance at first was to test the people's

wishes, flattering himself that they would spontaneously insist upon his resuming the double authority, which, knowing it to be illegal, he would have preferred receiving thus ; but when he perceived no symptoms of their doing so, he became but the more impatient, and mentioned to some of his friends his intention to resume his rights, as he then called them, without further delay. Amongst these friends was the old Gae-tano, in whose charge, it might be said, he had left his nominal deputy the Capitano at least, if not both his young relatives.

“ Do not attempt it,” was the old man’s advice in reply ; “ let the present rumours blow over before you move a finger. At present he is only deputy, and as such you have always some hold over him, some excuse for resuming your place when the tide turns again ; but, depose him now, and it will only be to see him elected Podestà instead of deputy.”

The Count fell into a tremendous fury on hearing this, but he had too much at stake to yield to that fury, except in words and gesticulations, while, in his cooler moments, he determined to consider and fix upon some one of the many plans which he could not as yet believe were not within

his reach for restoring all to the order he desired. He was certain, indeed, of the aid and support of the Florentine government in maintaining him in his two places of power, Capitano del Popolo and Podestà ; but this had been agreed to in the understanding that they were already united in his person. To prevent his being deposed, and to cause him to be re-elected by forcing Nino Visconti to resign against the manifest will of the people, were, however, two very different things ; and for the latter, matters were not ripe as the necessity had been unforeseen. In the meantime, little or nothing had been done for the prisoners at Genoa,—nothing for Ubaldo,—who, always a favourite, with the people from his gentle character, and affable, kind demeanour, had since his capture in their defence, become a sort of hero,—and nothing towards raising money to pay the debt to Barnaba. Of the Prior of St. Dominick's, indeed, he was sure as long as he had hopes to hold out to him ; but the very fact of being unable to repay him his money would be to declare the futility of those hopes. Not one of these important considerations escaped the acute and comprehensive mind of Ugolino ; but he had more than seventy-five

years upon his shoulders ; and his temper, never good, began now to suffer from his anxieties, and the undue tension of faculties for which Nature claimed repose. When the above subjects, all except that of the six thousand ducats, were first brought before him in council, he promised them his best consideration—he gave it, and at the next meeting he proposed the levying of a new tax as the only possible means of raising money. The tax was levied and paid, even cheerfully for some time ; but the clamours for payment of those who had been dragged from their families to be drilled for soldiers ; and of those employed in repairing the shattered vessels of the state, were to be silenced first ; and no prisoners returned, but, on the contrary, fresh petitions came from Genoa for food to keep them alive, as they were already dying in numbers from starvation ; and what seemed to have almost more effect, upon the survivors at least, those who died, were thrown into the sea without Christian burial. Upon hearing this a circumstance took place which I am not sufficiently learned to pronounce absolutely without parallel, but certainly of rare occurrence. A party of women, considerably exceeding a thousand, wives, mothers, sisters,

and perhaps, under some pretence, lovers, set off on foot to Genoa, hoarding with pious avarice what the passage by sea would have cost to give it to those they loved. Comparatively few of these returned—the accidents, hazards and fatigue of what was then a tremendous journey, cut off so many that those who arrived at their destination were thankful for having been allowed to fulfil their mission, and to lie down and die. This circumstance, also, had a powerful effect upon the public mind. In vain Ugolino caused proclamations to be made, and explanations to be given, that the undertaking was a wild and imprudent one—that the consequences were the fault of the victims themselves—that with a little more patience and confidence in the government, all would have been cared for, &c. Sufferers may not always be capable of reasoning, but they must, necessarily, be capable of feeling, and although interested demagogues may periodically succeed in exciting a people to insurrection by a picture of imaginary wrongs or evils, or a government endeavour to coerce them into a persuasion that they are happy when suffering want and injustice, the one will continue no longer than it affords excitement or diversion, nor the

other than until the means of coercion are exhausted.

The most sublime doctrines of philosophy never yet rendered a man content to have the gout or toothache, and the people are not in general idealists. The safest foundation, then, for any government is not the content, but the welfare of the people. Content is a moral result,—welfare a physical enjoyment: with the many the latter, therefore, will always control the former, and is, therefore, the desideratum to be studied.

The dismembered families of Pisa and its dependences, and their sympathising friends, began to discover that they were not happy under Ugolino; and as there was reason in this discovery, it was a dangerous one. They clamoured more loudly than before for their prisoner relatives, and a new debt was run up by the interior administration; a new tax was imposed, and Ugolino ordered it to be levied with extraordinary and unjust rigour upon the Coarsini, in punishment, he alleged, of the usury long sanctioned; but, as he and they knew, in revenge for a private pique. In return, they spoke openly, and, of course, with many exaggerations, of the loan which had been asked of one of their brother-

hood in the name of the state. Their assertions were no proof, especially as the loan had not been effected, but the Ghibelines treasured up the rumour with the information which they had acquired from Sattarello of the flasks of Vernaccia, and the more they obtained of such circumstantial evidence, the better they felt able to wait for yet more positive proof.

CHAPTER V.

UGOLINO had said even less than the truth to the Archbishop, on the subject of Bianca's desire to supply what might be wanting for Ubaldino's ransom. But, notwithstanding this desire, and notwithstanding that she was already, by her father's will, unrestricted mistress of a very considerable fortune, and notwithstanding all that he *did*, and all that she *could* say to the lawyers employed to raise the money in her name, or to transfer a part of her possessions for the purpose, it so happened, to the surprise of all, that there seemed insuperable difficulties in the way of bringing the matter to a conclusion ; and Bianca found more difficulty in giving away than others have in acquiring money. The consequence was, that Ubaldino remained in prison ; his uncle, like Visconti, positively refusing to allow the slightest sacrifice of the public money or interests to be made for him, beyond that which

would be made for the poorest and least important captive — an act of self-denial which astonished all who knew the Archbishop, either as the adoring uncle or the haughty, worldly-minded, although respectably conducted, prelate ; and perhaps the first symptom of Ugolino's faculties having seen their summer-solstice, was his not analysing that fact, and supposing that there was no more in it than what met the ear.

Nor, while the public finances were in this perilous state, did the Prior of St. Dominick's sleep over his own interests. Gently, indeed, at first, but with still increasing energy, had he hinted to Ugolino that he would be glad either to see him resume the post of Podestà, or to receive even one instalment of the large sum for which he stood bound to the Jew. Ugolino literally never had been able to content him in one or the other. He began himself to be distressed for money, for the common expenditure of his family ; for Donoratico, whence his chief means were drawn, had been closely drained, and his judgeship—if we may so translate “Giudice” — in Sardinia, had lately manifested some symptoms of insubordination, which, though quelled for the moment, left their usual fruits of bitter-

ness and ashes to the lord as to the tenantry, requiring time, care, and good grafting, to reduce them once more to palatable fare.

He was obliged to have recourse to a new tax, and now even Nino Visconti opposed it. Ugolino became pale with rage,—high words ensued, and Nino Visconti, starting up, we might say, morally and physically, threw off his authority for ever,—and now at last, the proud heart of Ugolino began to quail, for, for the first time, he began to feel insufficient to himself ; and oh ! woe and pity for that discovery where we cannot count upon the love of others, for that which we begin to want, and feel we never again can purchase ! Oh ! woe and pity for that moment, because, to add to its horrors, it can only come to the proud heart and haughty spirit. Ugolino felt it, but not yet in all its horrors ; and he hastened to the Archbishop, and complained of Nino Visconti's conduct. It was impossible, he said, that in the present critical state of the country, two persons could act at the helm,—that the very slightest discordance of opinion, a momentary hesitation, might bring on ruin ; and that, when matters were in such a state the responsibility ought not to be divided.

He was agreeably surprised to find the Archbishop much warmer in his manner, and apparently more sympathetic than he had been of late. He entered with interest into the affairs of the country ; spoke with anxiety of the pecuniary difficulties ; listened, patiently, at least, to Ugolino's complaints against his grandson, and asked how matters could be remedied.

The Count hinted at the effect which advice from his eminence might have upon Nino ; who, though differing from him in political principles, honoured and respected him sincerely, as a man and a Christian. The Archbishop consented to make the trial, but when Nino, with that evidence of truth which is rarely to be mistaken, even by the false, declared that, utterly divested as he was, by nature and by habit of ambitious views, his sole motive for not resigning the post which he first held as deputy, but now by the suffrages of the people, was to control the tyranny of his grandfather, the Archbishop felt, or seemed to feel, that in no point of view would it become him to push his remonstrances farther, and when Nino rose to depart, the Archbishop held out his hand,—not to be kissed, as was the usual token of respect, but to be pressed by him, for the first time.

What was Lancia about in the meantime? gloating with the greatest delight over the state of public affairs. "It is coming, it is coming," he said to himself and others, almost without cessation; and, while positively refusing in the most insulting manner, to pay his share of the newly-imposed taxes, he only lamented that the absence of Sattarello deprived him occasionally of some dainty particulars of Ugolino's wrath upon hearing of his contumacy, which would have come like the dessert to his mental feast; that worthy having been, on his return from Florence, induced once more to defer his marriage, all the more easily as the good Adelaida had positively refused to leave her lady in her hour of affliction, and having been dispatched again to Naples, Rome, Perugia, wherever a Ghibeline of any influence was to be found, to communicate with his own lips the story of the flasks of Vernaccia; and, above all, to Asti, where Montefeltro still continued, to the surprise of all, an apparently contented exile. Sattarello returned at length, however, having acquired the habit lately of executing his distant commissions more quickly, though not more faithfully, than before; and his first appearance was not

calculated to add that one drop to the cup of Lancia's enjoyment which was to make it overflow.

Lancia, Genivra, and Buonconte were sitting together one evening, waiting for the arrival of the Troubadour, when the door opened, and, pale as death, and agitated evidently beyond his power of control, Sattarello rushed in, looking behind him as if he had been pursued by invisible fiends :—

“Do you—do you know who is here?” were his first words, and so breathlessly gasped out that his three auditors started up with a vague feeling of some dreadful intelligence. “Raymond! Raymond Feraldo!” he went on; “he that made me the murderer of *her* father, mother, and grandfather,” pointing to Genivra; “he is here in disguise. I heard it at Naples, and I think I have seen him this moment in the street.”

As he uttered these words the door again opened, and the Troubadour, with that familiarity which had been long accorded to him, entered the room; but, no sooner had he done so, than Sattarello, fixing his eyes a moment on his face, exclaimed,

“Per Dio! it is he!—dannato!”

And before any one could foresee or prevent it, he whose life had been overcast, notwithstanding the joyous temperament which Nature had given him, by the recollection of the treachery of which he had been made the instrument, was grasping the traitor's throat. All instinctively threw themselves on him to prevent murder, for Sattarello's sudden frenzy, added to the immense preponderance of his bodily power over that of the Troubadour, left no doubt that such would be the issue, all except Genivra, who, upon Sattarello's explanation of whom he had seen, had resumed her chair, unable to support her shaking frame; and still sat there, lovelier than the loveliest statue that ever came from the chisel of Phidias or Praxiteles. No sooner had Lancia and Buonconte succeeded in loosening the grasp of Sattarello, whom they continued to hold as they might a raging mastiff, than Raimondo Feraldo, for it was he indeed, drawing himself up with an assumption of dignity which he had not yet manifested,

“Yes,” he said, “the time for concealment is past. I have delivered my credentials as ambassador of the King of Naples to the governors of

the Pisan Republic, and if any one feels himself aggrieved that while waiting for the return of him in whose person the whole authority was vested, I amused myself and others by exercising a popular talent without my court-dress, why there lies my glove," throwing it on the floor, and glancing at Buonconte as he spoke, "and every one knows where to find me. As for you, Genivra," and he advanced towards her—but, ere he had time to add a word, she stretched out her arm, as if to ward off his approach and his address together, although unable to articulate, and, after one moment's seeming hesitation, he threw up his hands, and, without another word, departed before any one had time to decide upon what ought to be done.

It was indeed Raymond Feraldo, he who, in his youth, had traced out the parents of Genivra by means of their faithful servant, and given them over to the slayer; it was he for whom Genivra had kept her dagger beside her by day and by night, and who, following up his talent for spying and intrigue, had now undertaken to visit Pisa as a troubadour, in order to find out exactly how matters were between the parties, and then, having withdrawn for a few days, to return in

the character of ambassador, with credentials for which he was furnished. But the absence of Ugolino, the few Ghibelines of importance at that moment in Pisa, and his involvements with Genivra, who positively refused to hear of his leaving Pisa on any terms, even for one hour, without her, on pain of an *éclaircissement* with her uncle, which he seemed to dread above all things, induced him to hazard remaining, and while he visited Ugolino still secretly, but as the Neapolitan ambassador, to continue his evening visits as troubadour at the house of Lancia. This farce he knew could be but of short duration, for his time at Pisa was nearly expired, and it was a mere accident which had caused him to defer until the following morning the information to Genivra that they must come at once to a decision as to their future plans ; as he had been obliged that day to appear in public as ambassador, and that therefore that evening must be the last of his being considered as the nameless Troubadour.

If deceivers could ensure the regular course of their plans, how unprotected would the guileless be !

When the street-door had closed upon Feraldo, and not till then, did Lancia and Buonconte

mechanically release Sattarello, and as they did so,

"Well, gentlemen," he exclaimed, "how do you feel now? Which has proved the most honest man amongst us?"

"For honesty," said Buonconte, while Lancia appeared as if struck into a sudden dotage; "for honesty, I hope we are all alike; but for whose privilege it is to chastise the miscreant traitor, I believe no one will dispute that with me;" and so saying, he took up the glove of Feraldo, and put it into his pocket.

He then turned to Genivra, who had never moved again; and as he attempted to approach her, just as she had done to Feraldo so she did to him, putting out her hand, as it were to forbid all to trespass upon her feelings.

Buonconte, however, although his love had considerably changed its character since her passion for the Troubadour had become too evident to be doubted,—a change which, by leaving him disengaged, and sometimes gay, had tended as much as the lover's own precautions to blind the poor old uncle to what was going on,—could not see the lovely creature in such a state of suffering without feeling some alarm; and, with

the view of rousing her stunned energies, he attempted to take her outstretched hand by force ; but no sooner did she become aware of its being imprisoned in his, than the wild stupified expression which had hitherto held her features in fearful tension, changing to one of fierce frenzy, she made a snatch with her disengaged hand to seize her dagger. It was no longer in her girdle. She looked inquiringly at its vacant place for a moment ; then saying, in a low, murmuring tone, "He did not like me to wear it," she went off into such fearful hysterical fits as nearly killed her poor old uncle with terror, while every medical man of any repute in Pisa was called in to her assistance. Her life was in no danger ; her conformation was perfect as her beauty ; and a few composing draughts restored her to a full sense of the horrors of her situation.

In this way the night passed. When her uncle visited her with daylight, the first words she said were,

"I must see Alfonso ! send for him immediately."

Her uncle feared the fever of her brain was returned, and tried to soothe her under that impression. She smiled ironically.

"Listen to me, ser," she said ; "either send for Alfonso, or I shall go to him ; that I swear to you ! Mind you, *I* swear it ; for if you seek to prevent me, living, I shall go to him dead."

Lancia fled terrified from her room, to consult with Buonconte. The latter, who knew better how matters were between Genivra and Raymond, and suspected more, while feeling of course less keenly on the subject of his early treachery than did the immediate sufferers, counselled Lancia to comply for once with a request urged under such penalties ; but while they were yet speaking on the subject, and before Lancia could quite decide between his feelings of affection for his niece, and abhorrence of the betrayer of her parents' lives, Sattarello arrived to inquire how she had passed the night, and brought the news that the Neapolitan ambassador had departed at daybreak, on his return to Naples, accompanied by Count Ugolino ; and that there was nothing spoken of through the town but the insult he had received at the house of Lancia, and Genivra's illness in consequence.

Lancia was not, as we have had many proofs, a person particularly well adapted for the ma-

nagement of a young lady, especially of Genivra's unusual habits and character, but, notwithstanding, he was far from being without a parent's feeling towards her, all uneducated as it was ; and when Sattarello, thus abruptly, though not without the motive of preparing him for danger likely to ensue, announced that her name had gone out thus, in addition to all the horrible fears and feelings which were already crowding on his heart, the poor old man, wakening to the conviction that he had mistaken the road of life, just when it was too late to hope ever to retrace it, sank upon a seat, and, in the pathetic words of scripture, "lifted up his voice and wept."

This second and sudden departure of Ugolino was a matter of surprise to the many : but the few, the very few in his confidence, knew that in part, at least, it was the result of their own suggesting. For, one of the changes observable in Ugolino was, that friends or partizans were now beginning to venture to offer him advice, or to hint suggestions, which although invariably spurned at with fury at first, he generally ended in adopting. His present absence from Pisa was one of these. The public coffers were, once more, absolutely exhausted. Every trade, every occupation lan-

guished. Ugolino had foreseen that the rewards of commercial intercourse between Florence and Pisa might be mutually beneficial ; but he found not the means necessary to render it so to the latter ; and the former usurped it all. The spur that will put the well-fed horse upon his metal, will cause the exhausted one to drop down dead. There was no possibility of going on without another forced tax.

“Do not attempt it,” said those who were interested in Ugolino’s continuing at the head of the government, for so he still was, although the financial branch might seem more properly to belong to that of the Podestà ; but from talents immeasurably beyond those of Nino Visconti, from long habit of universal dictation, even when the latter post was filled by the admiral Morosini ; from his still extraordinary influence over the minds of the generality of mankind, and with all Visconti’s well-principled intentions, not a little from their relative position of grandfather and grandson, he was still in fact *the* head of all, and Nino could as yet be considered little more—but it was much, all things considered—than a drag-wheel, the tiny sketch or skeleton, as it were, of our glorious “opposition benches,” and

until the earth can be proved level, these drag-wheels will ever be the machine's safety in the onward course.

"Do not risk it," said his partisans ; "but as the money absolutely must be had, withdraw, on some pretext, from Pisa for a moment, and let those who remain behind you take upon themselves the odium of collecting it ; when it is working you can return."

"Lancia must not remain in Pisa," he said ; "his insolent example alone is sufficient to infect the whole town. *I will not have him remain* ; do you understand me ?"

"We do—it shall be cared for ; but withdraw, for there is more ill-will against you than we care to say, and better organized, in some instances, than we can account for ;" and Ugolino, after another storm of such fury as, while it shook even his iron frame, convinced his adherents more and more, that he had seen his summer solstice ; and that they must save all the harvest they could, before the fast approaching hours of winter. Ugolino yielded the more readily to this reasoning, however, as he had one object, of his own originating, to accomplish also—that was, the obtaining the aid of Charles of Naples in support

of his pretensions to the Lordship of Pisa. He had sounded the ambassador upon this subject, but Raymond Feraldo, although sent expressly to find out the Ghibelines' secrets, by fair means or foul, in order to favour and support the Guelphs, did not see as clearly as Ugolino wished he should, that it was necessary that Nino Visconti, whose fathers' fathers or himself had never been known to swerve from their cause, should be deposed from his legal post in the government, in order to bestow it, illegally, on one who, of a Ghibeline family, had for the greater part of his life professed to be of that party himself.

It is true, that he had betrayed them more than once or twice ; and Raymond Feraldo did not assume the character of the *preux chevalier*, but still, even those who practise treachery themselves rely more upon those whose interests lead them to be true than on those whose interests lead them to be false ; that is, they know that there is a general weakness in favour of honesty, which, if all the advantages are equal, will lead ninety-nine in a hundred to adopt it ; and so Ugolino thought he had better go himself and see whether Charles was not more open to con-

viction. The only difficulty for some time was to give a satisfactory reason for this projected absence at such a moment.

Fortune had not yet quite abandoned him. The Neapolitan ambassador was grossly insulted in Lancia's house without redress. Ugolino departed with him in order to endeavour to avert the vengeance of the king from the doomed republic. The Archbishop was amongst those not in his confidence, and consequently surprised, especially as Ugolino in bidding him a formal adieu touched but slightly on the ransom of Ubaldino, merely regretting the delays of the law, and hoping to expedite matters on his return.

He left, as before, his relative Visconti, deputy Capitano del Popolo, and again under the guidance of Gaetano. Why the latter was not named to the post does not appear ; but we may suppose that, from its temporary nature, it was inconsistent with his age and dignity.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Genivra was informed of the departure of the Troubadour she smiled contemptuously at what she considered a puerile attempt to impose upon her ; but when, through her confidante, she ascertained that it actually was so, she sat down to count with impatience the hours which must intervene before a letter could arrive from the first town where he should stop, in order to tell her where and how to join him. In the meantime she determined not to leave her room, feeling herself unequal to hearing the subject discussed, and occupied herself in packing up such parts of her wardrobe, latterly modified more according to the reigning custom, as she deemed expedient to take with her. Unaccustomed to assign reasons for her little caprices she merely told her grand uncle that it was her will to remain for some days in her chamber ; and he, as unaccustomed to contradict her, submitted,

contenting himself with visiting her occasionally there, at which times she carefully concealed from his eyes the preparations she was making. In the meantime, the rumours of her *brouillerie* with the Neapolitan ambassador were increased a thousand-fold, and varied in a thousand different forms by the importance attached by Ugolino to the matter. It might elicit a smile from some, who are not yet acquainted with the inventive faculties of the invisible sprite, in French called “on,” in English “they,” in Italian “si,” in German “man,” and who, doubtless, though my language-lore extends no further, has as many other aliases as evil spirits generally have, to hear some of these ingenious distortions of the story ; but as it would inevitably fatigue the experienced, we forbear to give them. Suffice it to say, that finally they reached Ubaldino in his prison at Lucca.

The treatment of prisoners of war was, indeed, very different then from that to which increasing civilization, in its true sense, has reduced it in our days ; but the amelioration which has taken place is chiefly in favour of the poorer class of such ; as for the rich and influential, to say that such distinctions existed, is to say that they were

appreciated ; and that those who possessed them could almost always command their corresponding consideration. Ubaldino was one of these, and, accordingly, his treatment in prison was as little harsh as was consistent with his perfect security. This was chiefly, indeed, owing to the interference of the Archbishop of Lucca, who, though respected and beloved, unlike his brother dignitary of Pisa, was never, permitted by the regulations of the republic to interfere in the temporal government, otherwise than, as in the present case, in works of mercy. He visited Ubaldino often ; and it was from him that the latter heard of Genivra having been betrayed and abandoned by the Neapolitan ambassador, under the disguise of a troubadour.

It would be impossible to describe Ubaldino's sensations upon receiving this information. It will be remembered that he left her side in a fit of jealousy, but of that best form of jealousy, the determination to show her how deserving he could be of that which she denied him.

As in all else, without moderation or reflection, he threw himself into the heat of the affray with the Lucchese, and was carried away prisoner ;

but, as he told himself it was for *her* sake, he was at first rather distractedly glad than sorry for the event. A few hours, however, passed in the solitude of a prison, without any one to whom he could exclaim, “It is for her sake!” served to cool that Quixotism; and then her image returned in all its bright and hope-inspiring loveliness. In the ball-room, or in the open air, he thought of Bianca, infirm of health, and true of heart, and knew that she would deeply feel for him; but while acknowledging all this to himself, and hating himself for being able to do no more than acknowledge it, in order not to sink into despair at his own unworthiness, he constantly ended by recalling to mind that Genivra had saved his life; and in that plausible, but unreal, argument, he permitted himself to find an excuse for his passion for the one, and for his ingratitude and inconstancy towards the other, until at last, with no surrounding circumstances or associations to preserve his feelings in their legitimate course, or recall them when they wandered, imagination usurped complete power over them, and he gave himself up to its delusions without further effort, persuading himself, as probably many do, that it was not in the nature of things that all that was

so vividly pictured, and so ardently desired, should not one day come to pass! Such was his state when informed by the Archbishop of the removal of the only obstacle to his success, which he had ever really feared on Genivra's part, namely, the Troubadour; and, although that news came coupled with fearful additions, he knew so well how little rumours were to be relied upon, and how many mistakes and misapprehensions poor Genivra's unusual habits and manners had already given rise to, that he dismissed all that displeased him without a moment's hesitation; while his joy in hearing of the Troubadour's departure was only modified by the pain and mortification it must have caused to her; for Ubaldino, with all his faults, was not wanting in generosity; on the contrary, he was capable of great and voluntary sacrifices for those he loved; but he had not yet learned one of the most important of all social principles, to "be just before being generous;" and thus, not seldom in sacrificing himself for those he loved much, he forgot that he sacrificed others also whom he loved less. The consequence of his present compassion for Genivra having, in some degree, subdued his rapture at the flight of her lover, was that the Archbishop

perceived nothing in his manner of receiving the information to waken suspicions of the truth, of which he had previously been ignorant ; and so he departed, after having furnished it, quite unconscious, as many a one often is, of the wheels he had set in motion.

Although the Pisans and Lucchese were at this time on the worst terms, as, indeed, they had almost ever been—witness the splendid remains of the frontier fortresses, still existing between two lovely portions of earth, which, though God had joined, man had put asunder, but which are once more united, and let us hope for ever—and, although all communication had been strictly interdicted since the last onslaught, the Archbishop of Pisa and Ugolino had always found means, by ecclesiastics or some other neutral channels, to send messages to and receive them from Ubaldino ; and one of the most useful in such expeditions was our friend Fra Bonafazio.

He happened to be at Lucca, and on the very point of returning to Pisa from one of these visits, at the moment Ubaldino received the news of the Troubadour's departure ; and, whatever reflection might have done for one of Ubaldino's impressionable character, he was utterly unable

to resist the temptation of such an opportunity of conveying to Genivra his sympathy and condolence.

"Now, now, at last," he cried to himself, "she will see who really loved her!" and he sat down to write to her, without having exactly determined with himself how much he was at liberty to express of all the generous and compassionate feelings that were glowing in his heart.

Accordingly, yielding almost unconsciously to his feelings as he wrote, he made her an offer of his hand, almost unintentionally; telling her, indeed, at the same time, that it was not his to bestow, but imploring that that should be no obstacle; while he adduced Bianca's worth and his own want of it as the chief argument in favour of his being accepted by another!

But, although such was the real substance of the letter, stripped of its ornaments, these ornaments were so ingeniously strung together, as not only to form a very pretty letter, as letters then went, but very fairly to mystify, not the reader only, but probably also the writer.

When finished it was committed to the friar with a thousand charges of secrecy, and, above

all, from Count Ugolino's family. And it must be noted, that Ubaldino was ignorant, not of the intimacy, but of the peculiar nature of the intimacy existing between the confidant he had—we cannot say selected, for he had no choice—but of whom he availed himself, and the family against whom he cautioned him. Had he given fewer of such cautions, matters might, perhaps, have gone better; for Fra Bonafazio had three recommendations for the office assigned him. He was not treacherous, not a spoiler of sport, and not a devoted friend to Bianca, who never could be induced to receive either him or his lordly prior into her confidence; and, while the saintly Padre Tommaso distributed every soldo of her large contributions to charitable purposes, as scrupulously as if the welfare of his soul depended solely upon each, he did not escape the jealousy of those who would have been glad of, at least, the patronage to be derived from such.

At the moment of receiving the letter, indeed, Fra Bonafazio, though considerably surprised, did not imagine it to be of even half the importance it really was; for, as poor Genivra was believed by all below a certain class to be ill-conducted, even when she was the most innocent

coquette that ever loved and laughed at admiration for admiration's sake, so he supposed the letter to be some taunt, or *jeu-d'esprit* on her late discomfiture ; and was, therefore, not at all an unwilling bearer of it, to one who "was never known to bend her knee to priest or friar," contenting his conscience with saying, "Who knows but it will do her good ?—if she will not take advice one way, maybe she may in another."

After he departed, however, Ubaldino's extraordinary exhortations to secrecy occurred to him, on his lonely way and they began to assume different appearance in his eyes.

"What would become of me ?" he began to mutter to himself, "with that madman of a Count, for such he surely is become of late, if this were a letter to the Ghibeline uncle after all, instead of to the niece ? Who knows ?—these youngsters sometimes take much upon them in politics ; and maybe he is tired of his prison, and thinks, as his own friends have done little for him that he will try others."

The farther the frate removed himself from the influence of Ubaldino's presence, and exhortations to fidelity, the stronger became his apprehensions.

"Even if it were a love affair with this wild

girl—after all, it would ill become my cloth,—and against the Count's grand-daughter ! Lord ! Lord ! I believe I was mad to take the letter into my hands at all. I think I will just tear it into pieces, and give it to the winds ; but then, when I am sent back to Lucca, and when he asks me about it—and when he gets out of bondage, as one of his sort is sure to do, by hook or by crook, before long ! and then a whisper from him to his uncle against me—even when I should have done right in disobliging him—oh ! what is to become of me ? ”

Before the good frate was able to answer this question to himself, he arrived within a short distance of Pisa, and there he encountered Sattarello and Adelaida taking an evening stroll together. The friar's heart jumped with joy.

“ This is properly a God-send,” he said to himself, and almost to them. “ The friend—spy —confidant of the Lancia family ! —he is just the one to take charge of the letter,—it is his business, let it be what it will ; and if the other, being the maid of her mistress, does not like it, why let them settle that between them,—my conscience is clear, for I shall have done something for both parties ; ” and accordingly, approaching

the pair, he requested of Sattarello openly, and as the most natural thing in the world, to save him the trouble of seeking out other means of conveying the letter to Genivra, by taking that office upon himself; and, without giving him time to reply, or waiting to observe the effect upon Adelaida, he deposited the letter in Sattarello's hands, and proceeded rapidly on his way.

Sattarello, whose absence from Pisa during the time of the Troubadour's visit had deprived him of the opportunity of observing what to a mind so acute as his would have probably left him in no doubt of Genivra's attachment for that personage, if, indeed, it could then have taken place, was with all his love for Adelaida more interested for his own young lady, as he considered Genivra, than for Bianca; and being most desirous of seeing her, as he expressed it, "in some good man's care," before death should deprive her of that of her grand-uncle, he received this letter for her from the nephew of the Archbishop with somewhat of that species of pleasure with which a remedy is received to cure or prevent a dreaded malady.

With Adelaida, however, it was just the reverse. She hated Genivra as much, if not more, than

if she had been her personal rival ; and, when all her eloquence failed to prevail upon Sattarello to deliver up to her the letter he had taken in trust, and when she saw him deliberately deposit in the pocket of what would now be called his blouse, she determined to accomplish by stratagem what he refused to persuasion. Accordingly, when he escorted her home, and was about to proceed to execute his commission, she requested of him to delay a moment to receive one from her, as she should not be able to go out again that evening. He consented, of course, and Adelaida, whose constant intercourse with her young lady from their early childhood—for she had been her *protégée* even in her convent—rendered her *au fait* at much that would have been mysterious to others of her sex and station, applying herself to her lady's writing materials—a liberty which, if not permitted to her, as history is not diffuse upon this point, she doubtless considered excused by the motive—succeeded in folding, and binding with a silken thread, a letter so like in general appearance to that of Ubaldino's, that it would have required some scrutiny to detect the difference. Furnished with this implement, which she crushed a little, and con-

cealed in her pocket, she repaired to the apartment where she had left Sattarello ; and, after detaining him at least a quarter of an hour, while she gave him the most minute and apparently anxious directions, respecting a piece of ribbon to match a girdle which she showed him, she proceeded to express some doubts as to the quantity required, and suffered him to assist her in measuring her waist for the purpose of ascertaining it more precisely. The moment it was done she produced her counterfeit letter, and shaking it in triumph in his face, so as to prevent his perceiving the want of any superscription, as her education did not extend to penmanship, she affected to laugh heartily at the *ruse* of the ribbon which had enabled her to abstract it from his pocket ; and, when Sattarello, with that doubt which at once occurred to him, hastily drew forth the real one to satisfy himself, she snatched it from his hand, and escaped through the door, left purposely open, and away through apartments which being to Sattarello unexplored and forbidden regions, left him without the hope or the courage to pursue her.

So much accomplished, Adelaida had the prudence not to carry the letter to her young lady ;

to herself, she said, in order not to give too sudden a shock to her feelings ; but, we fear, a little influenced also by the instinctive conviction that she would not make of it that use which Adelaida had intended. She carried it to Beatrice ; and as that lady's haughtiness of temper rendered her much less subservient to established rules, and much more confident in her own decisions, she opened it upon the spot ; and, such was the indignation and contempt its contents produced in her, especially as she was one of the many who had heard of the affair of the Neapolitan ambassador, to which the letter showed that neither was Ubaldino a stranger, that, persuading herself that Bianca must participate in such feelings, and find in them her antidote, she flew to her chamber, regardless of all Adelaida's entreaties to caution, which, now that she had learned the extent of Ubaldino's guilt, were perfectly sincere, and imparted the whole to her in all its terrible reality.

Bianca received the intelligence in a manner which led Beatrice, for a time, to suppose that her anticipations of its effects were realized. She grew extremely pale, indeed, and trembled not a

little ; but her health and nerves had been so shattered of late, that a less serious cause would have produced that effect ; and, when Beatrice urged her to compose herself, and to remember how unworthy the object was, and how much firmness would be expected from one of her race and education, she said, with tolerable composure,

“ I have been educated a Christian, my sister, and I trust I shall not dishonour the name,” and bowing her sweet fair head, she kissed the little golden crucifix which she always wore hanging from a silken cord concealed in her bosom.

Beatrice not knowing exactly how to proceed in exclamations of wrath, which were neither reciprocated nor contradicted, and being, in truth, considerably softened ever since the day Bianca had entreated her to pray with her, remained silent for some minutes, contemplating, to do her justice, almost with admiring surprise, the effect of true Christian resignation, under, perhaps, the most trying misfortune that could befall a woman, all the circumstances, public and private, considered : and this feeling contributed probably to her acquiescing in a request which, after a short

pause for reflection, Bianca made to her with a degree of solemnity that also was not without its effect. It was that she would deliver the fatal letter into her hands, and that for the space of one week she would promise not to mention to any human being, not excepting Nino nor their grandfather, should he return, what had now come to their knowledge, in order to give time to Bianca to commune with her own heart, and escape being hurried into some decision that she might for ever after repent.

"I really am not as strong as I was some months since, dearest Beatrice," she pleaded! "and if, in consideration of this, you could have pity on me so far, I should consider myself deeply indebted to you; and, perhaps, when I shall be no more you will not regret it."

"Dearest, sweetest Bianca, do not speak, do not think thus," exclaimed Beatrice, really affected, and yielding at once, as she generally did, to every impulse, of whatever nature, she gave the promise Bianca required; and, although capable of opening a letter where she suspected treachery or danger to her or hers, and believing herself justified in so doing, she was not capable of breaking a promise deliberately made.

Bianca embraced her with affection ; and seemed, for the rest of that evening even more composed than she had been for a considerable period of time before.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Bianca retired to her room she had not yet seen Adelaida since the reception of the letter; for, with the delicacy of female sympathy, that faithful Abigail had forborne to accompany Beatrice when she went to make the disclosure, although her part in the discovery, and the domestic familiarity of the times, might perhaps have rendered her excusable in doing so ; and Bianca, purposely, in order to avoid her, until she should be more fully determined on her own plans, had accompanied Beatrice to the saloon and remained there with her until they parted for the night. At that hour, however, she knew she could no longer escape without more mystery than she chose to assume, in consideration either for herself, or for the feelings of her attached attendant. She summoned her, therefore, as usual ; but, instead of availing herself at once of her services,

having taken a chair, she made her take another close beside her.

"And now listen to me, my good, sensible Adelaida," she said ; "listen to me in two characters, that is both as my friend and as my servant, for you are both to me : and though we may each have sometimes forgotten the latter character, on this occasion it must be strictly remembered ; for, Adelaida, I feel very nervous, and could not endure either jesting or remonstrance, or, in short, contradiction of any kind. My mind is made up—perfectly made up—even my sister-in-law has been so good as to grant my request, and therefore you will, Adelaida—that is, then, you will obey me as my servant, and at the same time," she added, smiling faintly, "give me your help and sympathy as a friend. Will you promise me this, Adelaida ?"

"To the death, my dear, sweet lady ! and you know it well," Adelaida sobbed forth, seizing her lady's hand and covering it with kisses.

"Silly girl ! this is not the way you are to begin ! Listen to me, Adelaida ; you must help me to bear the misfortunes that it pleases God to lay upon me. Yes, my girl, you know all ; and it would be as unjust as silly to conceal from you

that this is a great trial, for many reasons—” and she was herself obliged to pause for several minutes ; and if, as we have already hazarded saying, no human eye saw her weep, it was at that moment because Adelaida’s face, being buried in the side of the bed near which they sat, prevented her seeing ; while her own violent sobs prevented her from hearing those which impeded Bianca’s utterance for a short time. The latter was the first to recover herself, however ; and then she went on :—“ Yes, Adelaida, I was too proud of my position. I will not say I was wrong to give up my intention of becoming a nun, because I certainly did not yield at first from selfish motives ; and the saintly Fra Tommaso told me I might be more useful in the world. But it is clear there was wrong somewhere—yes, yes, I understand that indignant look, Adelaida—well ! ” she said, looking upwards with the purest feeling of devotional self-abnegation, however mistaken it may now be considered ;—“ and if it be for *his* fault or weakness, I accept a part of the chastisement willingly, gratefully—and no good will come of searching too closely into whose it was. *I* bear the pain, and we know God is just ; and *if* I have not deserved it on this occasion, assuredly I often

have : so it would ill beseem me to murmur ; but I must act, my girl—I must act now according to the light that God has given me. You have promised to be faithful to me, Adelaida, and to assist me against the world ?” Adelaida looked up again for one doubtful moment.

“ You would not—you would not *go* to him, my lady ?”

Bianca smiled a sad, cold, pensive smile.

“ No, Adelaida,” she said, “ Count Ubaldino and I have parted for ever. Nay, you see I say it calmly !—for ever in this world, I mean. Now, then, will you promise me perfect secrecy ?”

“ I repeat then, as I said before, to the death.”

“ Then listen, Adelaida : I must write a letter to-night ; yes,—but it will not take very much time—it shall be very short, and you must convey it yourself early in the morning ; it is to the advocate..... to ask him if he can receive a visit from me soon after..... He will certainly inquire from you the reason of such a request, and you will tell him that I will explain all myself ;—that is all that is necessary for the present. But this believe, Adelaida, that in whatever I may do, I shall have no confidante but yourself or those whom it may be necessary for you to enlist in

my service. And now give me my writing things."

Bianca wrote her letter, Adelaida conveyed it the next morning, and at the appointed hour they repaired together to the lawyer's house. He was, as Bianca surmised, greatly surprised at such an honour, and at so independent a proceeding on the part of the Lady Bianca Visconti, especially as he was himself one of the most determined Ghibelines ; but she soon explained it, when with the utmost clearness and precision she laid before him all that had been doing since the time of Ubaldino's imprisonment, with a view of enabling her to assist in giving security for the sum necessary for his ransom ; and required him to say, upon his honour as a professional man, whether the difficulties were as real as they had hitherto been represented to her to be.

The lawyer thus adjured, and having glanced over the documents she brought, and listened to what he was able, distinctly, to repeat, because he had listened to it with the attention of affectionate interest and anxiety, told her, not only that the difficulties were fictitious, but that the form of her father's will seemed purposely adopted to render her and her own brother's possessions

peculiarly free and independent of all equivoque or control of any other person ; and that a form, not requiring many hours' occupation, would enable her to assign the whole, or any part of her portion, how or to whom she pleased. When informed of this, Bianca's heart rejoiced within her, and blessed her father's memory, for she read in it a foresight and care for her and for her brother, against her grandfather's tyranny, of which she believed she was then about to reap the fruits. She gave an immediate order to the lawyer to draw up such an instrument as he spoke of ; and the lawyer, supposing from all he heard and saw of what had already been done, that it was with the knowledge and consent of her family, undertook to have it prepared for her before the evening, when it was fixed that Adelaida should call for it. Bianca returned home, and again surprised Beatrice, and delighted her brother, by her calm and almost cheerful demeanour, the rest of the evening.

The following morning she mentioned to her brother and Beatrice her ardent desire of going to pass a few days with her friend, the Superior of the convent, at Santa Croce, as she felt that the change of air and scene would be beneficial

to her in every point of view. Nino, who knew nothing of the shock she had received, was rather pleased than alarmed by this proposal, and even Beatrice, who, though admiring her sister-in-law's gentle and pious character more and more, the better she became acquainted with it, was quite incapable of sounding its depths, and was yet in the popular error that such qualities were generally united with facility of purpose, if not dexterity of intellect, saw nothing in it beyond a desire to commune with her own heart, as she had already said, with more quiet, and what she knew she considered peace ; and, therefore, instead of teasing her with objections and opposition, gave orders that everything should be prepared in the most commodious manner for her little journey, which was of course to be performed on horseback ; and it was at her own especial consent that she was to be attended only by Adelaida and her father, whose family having been for countless generations tenants of the Visconti, and himself the servant of Bianca's parents while they lived, continued to lend himself with feudal devotion to any little extra service of trust required by their descendants, although he had long since, ostensibly, retired to

enjoy the fruits of his own industry, and that pension with which few Italian families fail to reward those domestics who have served them with fidelity—a practice which at once ensures that fidelity, and spares them the sight of that most distressing form of mendicity, “old servants past their labour,” and obviates the necessity of the contributions for the support of the innumerable asylums for old age, with which other countries are taxed.

Of course, I speak here of the servants who live always with their own native masters. Those who prefer the golden but short-lived harvest of the stranger, must be content to take the penalties with the advantages of such a life ; and they are generally severe in the end.

With this limited *suite*, then, her friend the fair Michelina of Santa Croce, having been made aware of her intended visit, Bianca saw the hour of her departure approach with a sort of forced, or, rather, we should say, feverish excitement, which superficial observers, or those not acquainted with what had passed, might be easily pardoned for mistaking for cheerfulness.

When every thing was prepared, and there remained but just time enough to accomplish her

purpose, Bianca placed herself once more at her little writing-table, and then, with more than ordinary facility, wrote two letters. The first was to the Archbishop of Pisa, and it was the nearest approach to a subterfuge or deception which she had ever attempted in her life. She wrote, that a lawyer had been found who had cleared up the difficulties, which had seemed to impede her being useful in a matter in which she was so deeply interested as that of his nephew's liberation ; that she now enclosed the document, duly filled up, which assigned to him the necessary sum for that purpose, imploring of him so to apply it with as little delay as possible, while she should withdraw herself from Pisa for the present, and make a visit to her friend the Prioress of Santa Croce.

Her second letter was to Ubaldino, enclosing that which he had written to Genivra, and ran as follows :—

“The accompanying was opened, and its contents made known to me, without my having had time or power to prevent it. I should regret the circumstance more, if, by having thus learned in time the obstacle to your happiness, I had it not in my power to remove it, by restoring

to you your promise, and withdrawing my own.

"In order at once to fulfil my original intention, and to save you from the censure of the world, I retire to my favourite convent, where I shall profess myself as soon as it may be possible ; and where I trust to find, once more, that peace which I was not to find in the world.

"Neither your uncle, nor my brother, nor any one that remains in Pisa, except Beatrice, knows at present the cause of this my withdrawal ; but as it would be useless to hope to conceal it for ever, I have only requested her secrecy for one week. I hope by that time you will be at liberty and able to arrange matters so as to ensure the happiness I sincerely wish you."

This letter she enclosed sealed to the Archbishop, begging of him to have the goodness to send it to Ubaldino by the first opportunity, deeming it better that he should receive it and have time to recover from the surprise it was calculated to occasion, before encountering the observations and inquiries of his friends at Pisa. When her little packet was completed, she dispatched it by Adelaida to the archiepiscopal palace ; and when left alone she indulged herself

in an unrestrained flood of tears, earnestly praying that by them might be washed out the last lingering of the visions that had led her astray for a few happy months.

Visconti had, somewhat contrary to Bianca's wishes, insisted upon accompanying her, as she feared every moment while in his society that some observation or some inquiry might betray all, and subject her to a scene of indignation against Ubaldino and tenderness towards herself, which she felt would agitate her beyond what she was now able to endure.

Having been summoned, however, in the morning to the Council Hall, he found there a subject in discussion which surprised him not a little, namely, that of condemning the old Admiral, Lancia, to exile, the opinions on which were so divided, and the disputes carried to such a pitch, that it was impossible for him, in his position of Podestà, to return home at the hour appointed ; and Bianca, not displeased at the excuse for setting out without him, for the reasons already assigned, with difficulty accepted her sister-in-law's escort for a short distance instead, and when they parted, it was with so much affection on both sides as surprised themselves, each feeling

the other to be more capable of wakening it than she had supposed, with only the difference, that Bianca received this impression with profound humility, for having, as she now told herself, too hastily doubted of it; and Beatrice, regarding it merely as a dicoverry that excused the condescension in herself towards her sister-in-law.

CHAPTER VIII.

BIANCA was, like all those whose sensibilities are stronger than their animal passions, peculiarly alive to what are popularly called “the beauties of nature ;” and as she now rode on through a part of the country where, though she had often passed before, the beauty of the scenery, the *colli ameni*—for I doubt if we have two words so expressive of that species of landscape beauty—absorbed, as it were, the poison from her bosom, and imparted a sort of balm that enabled her to look forward with more confidence to the hope she had expressed in her letter to Ubaldino, than she had felt while writing it.

Spring was just then in its first and happiest youth—an Italian spring. Are there, in these days of perpetual motion, any who have not yet enjoyed that glimpse of Paradise ? Oh ! if there be, let them make every justifiable effort to do so ; for until then, they are ignorant of their own

latent capabilities of enjoyment, and of what provision the Great Father has made for the exercise of those capabilities. Bianca looked round, beyond and behind her, and all, all was one scene of the most perfect harmony and loveliness. The vault of heaven, *so blue, so pure, so high, so rich,* the very shade of blue *so beautiful* as to give pleasure by that cause alone. And this vault, springing from hills which we English should call mountains, draped alternately in groves of chestnut and of olive trees—the difference of whose form, foliage, and colour, affords the most pleasing relief to the eye, while the *morale* rejoices in the proof of the elegant plenty they afford to those who dwell beneath their shade. Then the valleys between those hills! No, not their own Salvator Rosa has ever been able to convey an idea of the enchantment of those receptacles of the mountain's richness. As Bianca now passed they were glowing in one universal blush of peach and almond blossoms; and separated from the high road, and each person's little *terra* or *podere* divided by the luxuriant, ponderous, but ever elegant and graceful vines, thrown from one tree to another at various distances, according to their ages; but, in all cases, falling towards the

ground in a festoon that no hand but that of Nature could have formed. The little *fossi*, or drains made to let the water flow from about the roots of the vines, were blue—quite blue with violets, which filled the air with their delicious, delicate perfume; and the nightingales were everywhere discoursing of their happiness, in the language of Paradise. As I write now, this scene, or rather such another scene, is lying at my feet; while I have in addition—but as Bianca also will have it in a few minutes, the reader will listen to it more patiently from her.

“That is not the road, my lady; we keep on straight until we arrive at Calci,” said her old serving-man, riding closer up to her.

“I know it, Lorenzo; I know this road well; this is the forest of Alto-Pacio; but it is yet early. You know I am a good rider, and, if you do not think that you or Adelaida will be too much fatigued, I shall indulge myself by following this forest road for a mile or two. It is so delicious, after so many months in town, to crush our way through these myrtles and arbutus. How they have grown since I saw them last!”

“Adelaida and I are only too happy to follow you whither you please, lady; only,” rising in

his stirrups, and looking beyond where Bianca could well see, "all beautiful as the day is, I would not say that we may not have a *burrasca* before evening."

Once more I must apologize for introducing an Italian word, which I deem it necessary to translate. The reason is, that our word "storm" does not convey the idea of an Italian *burrasca*, either in its suddenness, its violence of rain, hail, thunder and lightning, or in the shortness of its general duration ; and this explanation I offer because I hope to have many readers amongst those who either know not the Italian language, as yet, or only through the medium of the dictionaries and vocabularies.

Bianca disregarded the old man's prognostics. All her little signs of partaking of our fallen nature had ever been confined to being less careful of herself than her friends would have wished. On this occasion she experienced for the first time in her life, a sort of determination to indulge in the luxuriously-ethereal feelings, if we may yet again be permitted the expression, wakened within her by the incense offered to her senses in that ride. Her thoughts rose indeed in gratitude to the Creator of all that so much

delighted her ; but still she felt, in her ever-regulated purity, as if she were yielding to a temptation—making a sort of *escapade*, by turning out of her way, into that tempting forest, against the hints of her old attendant ; but yet she yielded, determinately yielded, for the first and last time of her innocent life, to a temptation, doubtful, or rather believing it to be such. It almost seemed as if fallible nature required some little counterpoise to the sacrifice she had made, and was about to make, so nobly, so purely, so entirely. Would they not, then, be very severe judges who should say that what succeeded was intended as a chastisement ?

She rode on, more and more delighted at every step, and following every path that tempted her eye, until at last, once more, Lorenzo reminded her that “a mile or two” had grown into three or four, and that he, an experienced observer of the weather, could no longer be mistaken in the prognostics of a storm, which he even feared to be near at hand.

Bianca could resist, when only her own safety was in question ; but the anxiety of the old man, both for her, and for the faithful fulfilment of his charge, she would have deemed it a crime to

resist ; and, accordingly, she turned immediately, with a slight movement of her lovely mouth, between a pensive smile, and a playful sigh. To retrace her wilful deviations was now, however, the question ; *she* believed one path to be that they had passed ; Lorenzo, believed another ; Adelaida, a third. In short, it was the same story that has continued to our own time, the resemblance of forest path-ways deceived them, and they lost their way, and were overtaken by one of the most awful of the Italian spring *burrascas*. The day had been sultry. Bianca was not strong, and the ride, together with the sun, had overheated her, and she now became, in spite of all the efforts of Adelaida and her father, to protect her, as completely drenched under the comparatively chill influence of the forest shade, as if she had been let down into a well. She began to feel somewhat alarmed at her own sensations, and Adelaida became almost frantic with terror. Lorenzo was grieved and mortified, at the same time, for, perhaps, there is scarcely a position in which a man feels more his own insignificance than when lost in a forest, with those he had undertaken to protect, exposed to the fury of a

southern thunder-storm. If they ought not to be there, it seems but a poor excuse at that moment, that those had guided who should not have guided. The present party moved from tree to tree, as the lightning seemed to pass nearer or further from where they paused for shelter, in the seeming instinct of shunning even the danger which is already past; or, as the foliage seemed to promise better than that already saturated above them.

At last the storm began to abate, and then came that fresh cold air which always succeeds, and Bianca again shivered with unusual sensations; and Adelaida again wrung her hands, and examined her own and her father's persons with greedy eyes, to see if there were nothing more of which they could despoil themselves in order to cover their young and beloved mistress. In a few minutes they saw Bianca start, and listen with surprised but eager attention; and almost at the same moment she exclaimed,

“ That is the bell of the Hospital di Rosaio! Is it possible we have wandered so far out of the road ? ”

Their attention once attracted, Adelaida and

her father, also, recognised the sound. It was, indeed, that call of charity which rang forth every evening just after night-fall, or, as upon the present occasion, after an extraordinary *burrasca*, or other occurrence that might render it necessary, to tell the stranger who had lost his way to be of good cheer, for that one of the ministers of Him who has invited to refreshment the weary and heavy-laden had there established a resting-place, in order to redeem his great Master's promise.

There was no second opinion as to obeying its call, for Bianca felt that she had been imprudent, and that all that now remained for her was to hope to be able to repair that imprudence. They set forth accordingly, as nearly as was possible in the direction of the bell ; and when they arrived, and the superior of the establishment, which consisted of an hospital and convent united, was informed of the rank of her who asked his hospitality, he received her with that dignified respect and benevolence which formed a perfect illustration of the command, to give unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's, and to God that which is God's.

She was immediately provided with all that was suitable to her present situation, of which a

store was always kept in readiness for whoever might require it ; and, for a few hours, she flattered herself that she should be able in the morning to pursue her journey, before her friends should have time for anxiety on account of her non-arrival. This hope, however, proved fallacious ; the symptoms which had appeared the night after her remaining exposed to the evening air, on coming out heated from the Cathedral at Pisa, re-appeared, but with a very aggravated character, and, before morning, the physician of the establishment told the superior not to defer sending to inform the young lady's friends of her state.

When this was made known to her, she requested to see the physician again ; and, with that clearness and judgment which seem not to be of, nor for this world, and which has given rise to the homely saying of “ too good to live,” among the lower orders, and to the same sentiment, expressed somewhat more diffusely among others by the couplet—

“ God takes the good, too good on earth to stay,
And leaves the bad, too bad to take away.”

She said she called him, not in order to ask if she was in danger, for she was sure so early in

an attack of illness of this nature, and so little as he was acquainted with her constitution, he would not hazard an opinion on the point; but she wished to know whether he could pronounce with certainty that for some days she should not be able to move; as, in such a case, she should consent at once to her friends being informed; but if there were hope of her being able to proceed so far as the Convent of Santa Croce within a day or two, she would entreat of him, to prevent the superior from spreading unnecessary alarm.

The physician saw at once that he had to do with a superior mind; and kindly, but decidedly answered that her removal before many days would be quite impossible, unless at the risk of her life; but they would now be guided by her wishes as to sending or not to inform her friends. She reflected for a few minutes and came to the resolution to wait for another day in order to see how she might be. To the convent, she said, it was unnecessary to send in any case, as there they would suppose she had not set out from Pisa as soon as was intended; but as her brother would expect to hear of her safe arrival she gave orders on the spot that Lorenzo should hold himself in readiness to return to

Pisa next day and mention to Visconti what had happened. In the meantime the inflammation of the lungs progressed rapidly, and the remedies to which it was necessary to resort, in order to subdue it, reduced her to the last stage of weakness, and, next day, she was the first to renew the orders for informing her friends of her state, only providing that Lorenzo should not arrive at Pisa in time for Visconti to attempt setting out the same evening, because, while certain that his anxiety would lead him to do so, she knew that his being absent a whole night and the following morning might, in the state of public affairs, and when so much responsibility devolved on him, be attended with great inconvenience. The old man set out accordingly, so as to arrive in time to give the news to Visconti the same evening, and it is needless to dwell upon the alarm and anxiety felt by that attached brother upon hearing that a being so beloved, so refined, and so delicately nurtured was, at such a period of her life, and in her present circumstances, lying dangerously ill, as he understood from Lorenzo, in an hospital—even though it was a convent hospital,—amongst utter strangers. Late as was the hour, and important as was his presence in

the Senate-house at an early hour next morning, he would at once have set out for Alto-Pascio, little as night travelling was at that time in repute, had not Beatrice, almost as much to his surprise as to his satisfaction, expressed her intention to accompany him. He thanked her more warmly than he had ever had occasion to do before, since their marriage ; and agreed not only to wait, but to follow her advice by appearing at the Council-board next morning previous to their setting out. To do Beatrice justice, she had her own private motives for this latter clause, besides the public ones by which she might be supposed to be actuated. She knew that the condemnation of Lancia to exile was almost certain of being carried on that occasion ; and not yet capable of appreciating, however sincerely she had begun to admire Bianca's character, she believed the news would be a balsam to her aching heart, and even in her newly-awakened compassion, deep as were her disgust and contempt for Ubaldino, she almost allowed herself to wish that the enchantress once removed, a pardon and reconciliation might yet be effected between him and Bianca.

The decision at the Senate-house was as she

anticipated. The Count Lancia was ordered to quit Pisa within twenty-four hours, under penalties which, as his contumacy was well known, were such as even he could not resolve to incur ; though with what feelings he submitted the reader must by this time be able to judge for himself. He was condemned on the double charge of resisting the law, in refusing to pay his share of the public taxes, and of having permitted the Neapolitan Ambassador to be insulted in his house without redress, even after he had declared his rank. The last charge, indeed, every one felt would have been better omitted under all the circumstances ; but still it was added ; as we see, daily, good reasons weakened, if not intrinsically, at least in general acceptance, by bad ones being, no one knows wherefore, added to them. Being the bearer of this news, removed from Beatrice one half of the anxiety she had felt the evening before ; and it was with difficulty she resisted making Nino a sharer in her feelings, by revealing to him what reason Bianca had to rejoice in the circumstance, although it yet wanted two days of the promised week of forbearance.

They arrived at the Rosaio of Alto-Pascio without accident, and when Bianca all weak,

languid, and exhausted as she was, saw her sister-in-law follow her husband on tip-toe to her bedside, she put out her hand, and pressing that which Beatrice gave her, with a smile that was already beatified, she whispered the words, “Dear Beatrice!” and with her eyes expressed to, and received from, her brother affectionate congratulations on his wife’s amiability. Beatrice saw the look, understood it; and, to the infinite surprise of both, returned the words,

“Dear, amiable Bianca!”

And her good husband, with tears in his eyes, blessed God in his heart for this her first sign of feminine gentleness.

“You must not be frightened at seeing me so low,” were the next words Bianca uttered. “They have bled me profusely, which is the cause of my prostration; but still you must be sufficiently alarmed,” she said, smiling, “to grant me an easy absolution for a confession which I have to make to both.”

The absolution was promised, but she was exhorted to be silent.

“Not for half an hour more,” she said, “as that is the time I will allow you, Nino, to remain with me; but I must not let you go away with-

out easing my conscience by telling you all. Does Beatrice remain with me?"

Nino looked anxiously at his wife, for nothing had been said of her remaining to attend on Bianca, and he knew that such a sacrifice would be so little consonant with her usual habits, that he was almost frightened and surprised at Bianca's alluding to it. It was, however, one of Bianca's little snares for leading the wavering to do right, by seeming to take it for granted ; and, so disinterestedly, that, to her, it made no difference whether it was herself or another who might be the object. In this, as in many another instance, she was successful.

"Surely, surely, dearest Bianca, I will not leave you," returned Beatrice. "Nino will go back to Pisa, though not in half an hour, he will require longer time to rest, and he will send me Rosaura with such things as she knows I may want ;" and when she had an opportunity of speaking to her husband apart, she told him that it was their finding Bianca so much more low than they had expected which had decided her upon remaining ; and she probably believed, at the moment, that it was as she said ; and Nino resembled his sister too much in sympathetic gentleness, to scrutinise

too strictly the motive of the neophyte when the duty was performed ; that, indeed, is a scrutiny that only befits two, the Searcher of Hearts and the heart to be searched.

When evening approached, and Bianca felt that Nino's remaining to a later hour, would, by rendering her anxious and nervous, be more injurious than beneficial to her, she called him and Beatrice close to her bed-side once more ; and then made to them the astounding confession that she had left their house with the determination never to return to it ; and implored their forgiveness in the most earnest and affecting terms ; assuring Nino that she had only deferred writing to him a full confession of her intentions until she should have arrived at her journey's end ; fearing that, had she told him before setting out, her own and his feelings together would have had the effect of disabling her for the fulfilment of that which, nevertheless, she should have continued to think her duty.

Nino, who as yet knew nothing of the cause, was at a loss what to think ; but, when he saw her look towards Beatrice, and heard her whisper,

“ You have not then told him ? ” and saw by

Beatrice's eager manner that he was to hear some serious explanation, he asked anxiously for it.

Before Beatrice had time to reply, however, Bianca said hastily,

"Not now, not here, dearest Beatrice—I could not bear it now; you will tell Nino afterwards; he will then understand and agree with me that the step I have taken was the only one to stop that uproar and resentment which, upon such a subject, could only serve to draw upon me the public eye in the most mortifying manner, and, which would be, by far, the most difficult part of my trial."

"But there will be no occasion for it now, I trust," Beatrice exclaimed; "I have news that will, at least surprise you;" and she informed her of the condemnation to exile of the Count de Lancia, adding, "so you see all may yet go well."

Bianca smiled a quiet but expressive smile; and suffered her eyes to ask her sister-in-law whether, indeed, she supposed it possible, that she could derive consolation from an interruption, so enforced, of the lovers' intercourse, even if it should prove to be such.

Again Beatrice surprised her and Nino by

showing that she understood and entered into her feelings, as she replied,

“ I know, I know, dear Bianca, it is not the pleasantest way, perhaps, of recalling him ; but, once recalled, we must not be too severe as to the means.”

And when, again, Visconti was about to ask for an explanation of these allusions, Bianca again prevented it by saying,

“ Dearest Beatrice ! how very good and kind you are ! ”

“ *Becoming !* ” added the latter, as if finishing the sentence ; and, perhaps, not all the professions, or assurances, that ever were studied, could have produced so agreeable a conviction upon those who heard that single word added, without ironic humour or haughtiness.

“ Become, then, if you will ! ” repeated Bianca, with her usual pious tact ; “ for, if it be so, you well know the more gracious and acceptable it is ! ”

“ Thanks, my sister ! ” cried Nino, in ecstasy, “ thanks, for expressing what I feel so deeply, so gratefully : this dear girl— ” and he would have taken his wife’s hand, but she playfully drew it back, saying,

“ Be sure I merit your thanks before you give

them ; suppose—" and she hesitated a moment, and, with a slight blush, continued—" suppose my reformation, if it be such, were all selfish ? "

" Selfish !—how ? "

" Suppose—suppose I wanted to win Bianca's indulgence, and regain my husband's affection, for—for a being who may be dependent upon both!"

Still neither understood her ; or, if an ecstatic hope flashed across her husband's mind, he did not dare to let it linger.

" You cannot guess what I allude to ? " she went on : " What is the strongest earthly inducement that could be offered to a childless wife to correct her faults ? "

At these words both husband and sister started up, the one to catch his wife to his bosom, almost as gratified by the manner and moment of the announcement, as for the gift she promised him ; and the other to say,

" Now, then, I know that I am in favour with my God ! my prayers have been heard—my brother will be happy ! Forgive, and kiss me, now, my real sister ! "

" And you ventured to ride yesterday ! Oh, my love, how could you be so rash ? " Nino presently

exclaimed, in all the first important flutter of paternity.

“ Nay, silence, Nino ;” his wife replied, holding up her hand playfully, but still with a little remains of *Estensic* imperiousness. “ I have trusted myself to your honour, I have told you my secret without making conditions before hand, but I expect them to be equally observed when announced now ! I will not be treated like a puling girl ! I will not have all eyes—servants and all—drawn upon me, and have people counting how long I have been married, without this so-called blessing — ahem ! being vouchsafed to me, and conjecturing what vows, or penances, have procured it for me. Nay, Nino ! do not be too exacting, let me take my own way a little yet ; you know even good wives become bad ones on these occasions, so what have I a right to become ? ”

“ Good ! good ! my sweet wife, following out your own antithesis.”

“ Bravo, bravo, Nino ! Do you know, Bianca, I think that is not bad *for Nino* ! What a thing it will be if this creature makes its mother good and its father wise even before it is born ! What

are you thinking of, Bianca ? tell me, truly, as my reward.”

“I am just thinking by how many, and sometimes by what delightful means, the Almighty draws us into the right path !”

“Oh, I feared quite another compliment from you after my last speech.”

“No ! speeches made in that spirit, and so opposite to the reality, can never be offensive,” and again Beatrice was half persuaded that she had never seriously called her husband a fool, and almost even to doubt if he really were so ; and she was the first to remind him this time, that the shades of evening would overtake him ere he could arrive at Pisa. When he withdrew she did not follow him to give the explanation about Bianca and Ubaldino, nor did he show any farther desire to receive it ; for, at that blissful moment, they both believed that the world was about to become a better and a happier world for every one !

This was the child of whom Dante makes her father, when he was in purgatory, say,

Quando sarai di là dalle larghe onde,
Di a Giovanna mia, che per me chiama
Là dove agl' innocenti si risponde, &c.

CHAPTER IX.

FOR the two succeeding days Bianca's illness seemed to be held in check ; and although no leading questions could induce the intelligent priest physician, to say he felt at ease about her, neither did he feel compelled to insist that the case was absolutely without hope. Bianca, whose mind was so clear upon all other subjects, was not exempt from the deceptive hope that attends upon pulmonary disease, not unaptly compared to that of the self-deluding speculist, and she accordingly assured Beatrice that all alarm was unfounded, as "if she could but cease to cough," she should be quite well. She became, in the mean time, more beautiful than ever, for hectic brightness had now set in to give deceptive lustre to her chiselled features.

For some days after, Nino found it absolutely impossible to escape from Pisa, and was forced to content his anxiety by sending multiplied mes-

sengers to those become, if possible, dearer than ever to him. At last he made his way to them ; but instead of the joyous and grateful husband which he shewed himself at parting, and which even Beatrice had begun to picture to herself he would be on his return, he presented himself before them pale, haggard, almost wild-looking, and with a forced and excited manner which but ill concealed some great shock recently received and not yet recovered from.

“ What has happened ? ” was accordingly Beatrice’s first exclamation.

“ Ubaldino ? ” was that of Bianca, who had the day before been allowed to sit up for an hour in order to inhale the balsamic air, and who was now sitting under a vine-covered portico to which she had been carried.

“ Ubaldino is well,” he replied at once ; “ and his release being effected, he is expected in Pisa to-morrow ; but I do not know why you think anything has happened ! ”

“ Nonsense, Nino ! —think to impose on me, indeed ! —tell us in two words, is it anything we can make you tell by fair means, or foul ? ”

“ No, then—it is not,” answered Nino, decisively, too glad so to escape being further ques-

tioned. “But I was sorry to be so long prevented from returning to you ; and I am here now to learn whether it would be possible for Bianca to be removed to Pisa, as I greatly fear it will not, for some time to come, be possible for me to see you here as often as I could wish. The affairs of the Republic are not at all in a desirable state, and my grandfather’s absence renders that state, if not worse for the people, more difficult for us.”

“To Pisa, dear brother ?” Bianca said.

“To Santa Croce, you would say ?”

“No, dearest.”

“No, dearest !” they answered together.

“You will not leave us ?—you will not go” added Nino, “in your present state of health—where I could scarcely ever see you, and only know you to be taken proper care of by the sacrifice of my more than ever beloved Beatrice ?”

“Nor will you refuse to second the work of reformation you have begun ?” pursued Beatrice ; “For, jesting apart, Bianca, you must know, that without wishing to rob this little stranger of a particle of its merit in this affair, it would have been differently received by me had you not somewhat prepared me beforehand ; and it is somewhat of a coincidence that the first day I

was quite certain of my state, was the day I knelt down to pray with you upon the occasion of Ubaldino's capture ; and, I must confess, it was the first time I ever prayed, except at the prescribed times, and in the prescribed forms ! Let us hope, dear Bianca, that the prognostic was a happy one for us all !”

“ It was, it was my sister !—of that there is no more doubt, than that yonder sun gives light to the earth ; but do not let us fall into the mistake, that God rewards spiritual feelings or exercises with earthly goods or earthly happiness ; the reward, if we must call it so, of such, is in the power they give us to bear with calm and resignation, whatever it may please God to lay upon us ! Were it otherwise, few could ever test the sincerity of their devotion, and fewer still prevent its degenerating into a sort of trafficking with Heaven. I know you will both excuse me,” she added, taking a hand of each ; “ for I only repeat what I have heard, and, I hope I may say, learned from our dear, good Padre Tommaso.”

And now, once more, Nino used his utmost endeavours with her to return to Pisa, promising that, if, after being one month perfectly re-established in health, she should still continue in her present

intention, not only would they offer no farther opposition, but would not permit it to be offered on the part of Ugolino, when he should be informed of it. Bianca found it impossible to resist their united entreaties, although she said, "You see now, if I had reason to keep my secret," especially as her brother intimated that he had some particular reason for entreating for her return, which he felt not at liberty to impart. Beatrice looked eagerly from one to the other, when he said so, but while the expression of sadness mingled itself on Visconti's countenance, even while he eagerly entreated, Bianca once more smiled the cold, quiet smile which might have convinced them how futile was now every hope that she could again be induced to change her mind on the point to which she believed their entreaties tended. Accordingly, though without saying that she guessed their thoughts, and previous to giving her promise, "I must exact yet another condition," she said, "and that is, that no one ever makes to me an allusion of what was supposed to be my position, with regard to the Archbishop's nephew, for the last few months!"

"Ever, dearest Bianca?"

"Ever! on no other terms will I return—my

own wishes or feelings I should ever desire to sacrifice to yours, Nino—to both, I may now say, as you will henceforth be one ; but duty, conscience, are not mine to yield—they are only entrusted to me.”

“But, dearest Bianca, how does duty or conscience prohibit such allusion ?”

“They prohibit all that tends to turn the mind from that which is to be our lot, by dwelling on that which it is not to be,—and Fra Tommaso says that is the reason why sins of thought, that certainly never would have become sins of action, are forbidden : the mind of man, and particularly, I suppose, that of woman, is not strong or abstracted enough to fulfil their entire duty to one object, while wishing it were another.”

“But, dearest, you cannot think it your duty to leave us all and become a Nun ?”

“Now, unquestionably, I do ; for I have offered my vows to God, and I have no power or right to withdraw them ; but that is not the duty to which I alluded. It is my duty to forget Ubaldino, to forget, at least, what have been our projects ; it is my duty to calm and tranquillise my mind and feelings, in order to be ready for whatever else may become so ; and nothing of

this could I do, if subjected to constant allusions to those subjects."

"Will you not then consent to see Ubaldino?"

At this question, Bianca's cheek became, for the first time, slightly suffused.

"It would be what *you* two would call a better sign for him, should I say no," she replied, after a moment's hesitation; "and, to show you how far I am from wishing to deceive you or myself, I will confess that I should be glad to be spared it; but, as I can scarcely hope for that, without a breach between the families which I pray to Heaven to avert—and which, dear Nino, was to have been my last farewell request in the letter I was about to write to you—I will consent to receive him, if he will conduct himself so as to show he can, at least, respect, though he could not love me."

"Not love you, Bianca! you know not—"

"Pardon me, my dear brother, I know *all* now—Ubaldino is a good, kind creature, who wishes to do right—but, oh! he is one of those who should study his own character and tastes much before he takes into his keeping the welfare of a being with an immortal soul; for we know how much, though how mysteriously, the one is linked with the other!"

"But, our grandfather, Bianca ! do you not think of the consequences with him ?"

"I have thought of them—weighed them all, Nino ; but my path is now too clear for me to wander more. He who reads all hearts, alone knows how much of what I feared might be feminine pride or dignity I sacrificed to that consideration, and to save Ubaldino from what we call dishonour ; to do more would be weakness ; and, by disgusting him with me, would only be to lead him into deeper error."

Nino, now, once more became anxious to hear what new circumstance had occurred during the latter days, as he knew it must have been, of Ubaldino's imprisonment, to bring the gentle, forgiving Bianca to a decision, that he began to fear from her manner might be irrevocable ; but, as she still shrank from hearing it discussed in her presence, and as Beatrice, not yet despairing of a reconciliation, was unwilling, on consideration, to reveal what would add immeasurably to the difficulty of such, the latter again succeeded in leading him to suppose it was some comparatively trifling misunderstanding, of which it was as well he should remain ignorant.

The conversation ended in their acceding to

Bianca's conditions, as the only means of inducing her to return to Pisa ; and Nino now confessed that he had caused two litters to follow him, in order, if it should be pronounced safe, that his wife and sister might return with him that lovely evening.

Beatrice, at this information, darted one of her old looks of thunder at him, and declared that she was already repentant for having told her secret, and that, since he did not choose to bring her own trained and ambling pony, instead of getting into the litter she would borrow one of the poor friar's jogging mules and try whether he should be able to overtake her once along the road to Pisa. Bianca closed the discussion, however, by saying that she would not be the only one carried in such a manner, and that if Beatrice really wished her to return with them she would consent to keep her in countenance. Not, perhaps, very sorry, after all, for the excuse, Beatrice yielded, after some more threats and naughtinesses towards her husband, but which he now received as sparks of wit and playful humour; and the physician, apprehending no risk to Bianca from being transported in that manner, the plan was adopted, with only the modification that they

should not set out until next morning, in order to give Bianca another night's repose, in which Nino, though somewhat disappointed, being under the necessity of returning to Pisa immediately, acquiesced, and again they parted.

Bianca passed the night tranquilly, although still coughing and showing inflammatory symptoms, and, at an early hour, in order to avoid the midday heat, which was already considerable at that season, they set out, amidst the prayers and blessings of the good people amongst whom they had sojourned, and who crowded round, with more than usual solicitude, to wish health to the lovely invalid.

They arrived at Pisa without accident ; but, notwithstanding the easiness of the mode in which she had been conveyed, Bianca felt fatigued from the mere action of the air, and desired to be laid for a moment on the sofa in the drawing-room to recover, ere proceeding to her own apartment.

Beatrice, having aided in placing her as she wished, had just retired to her room, to lay aside her travelling dress, when her attention was attracted first by the sound of a man's footsteps rushing furiously up the stairs, and then by terrified

shrieks proceeding from different voices. In a moment she was again in the saloon, and there, indeed, a sight presented itself such as her imagination would have failed to picture.

Bianca was lying on the arm of Adelaida, flushed, gasping, terrified, while Ubaldino, foaming and gesticulating like a madman, kept reiterating—

“ Give her back to me, I say ! I will pull down the house, but I will find her out ! Exiled !—drowned !—tell such tales to babes and sucklings ! —as if I did not see the two litters at the door, in one of which you have brought her here ! Yes, yes, Count Ugolino ! you think you can treat us all like automatons at your will ! but one at least I will protect ! Listen to me, Bianca,” he said suddenly, falling on his knees before her and lowering his voice, though not rendering it more calm—“ I have been a rascal to you—I know it—but I neither can nor could help it—it was Nature—she was my destiny. Give her back to me, and I swear to you we shall fly ;—yes, yes, I know, I feel that, abandoned by all, she would now fly with me, and never more should you be annoyed with either of us ! God ! what is that ? what have I done ?” he cried, starting up and

catching his head frantically between his hands, while, with eyes starting from their sockets, he now gazed terrified upon Bianca, as, leaning slightly forward, a stream of blood was seen to flow from her mouth, at the very moment that Beatrice made her way towards her.

“Bianca ! dearest ! Adelaida !—any of you !—what is this ?” exclaimed the latter—“Bianca !” while Ubaldino, gasping fearfully, continued gazing wildly, but now silently on the scene.

Bianca raised her eyes to her sister’s face. There was no mistaking that the lamp of life was on the wane.

“Run ! fly some one for a physician—for as many as you can find,” cried Beatrice ;—“lay her back, Adelaida ; for the moment we cannot move her !” and she motioned with her hand to Ubaldino to withdraw without trusting herself to look upon him.

He obeyed the movement, and dashing his head against the door-post as he passed, rushed out of the house.

Bianca, in the meantime, with the little strength which remained, made signs of resistance against being laid down flat ; and, happily, they did not insist—as unsympathising health sometimes does,

against the invalid, at a moment when only *dying* nature can judge what it requires ; for all felt that she apprehended suffocation in a few minutes.

The purple stream ceased to flow ; but ever and anon a slight convulsive effort, scarcely amounting to a cough, partially renewed it ; and Beatrice stood by her, wringing her hands, while Adelaida, pale, silent, terrified, seemed totally to have changed her character. Indeed she seemed to have done so from the time of her beloved lady's first illness at Alto-Pascio, in instinctive anticipation of what was impending.

For about a quarter of an hour this scene continued, without other variation than a sign or whisper exchanged between Beatrice and the women attending round the invalid, who had not herself as yet either uttered or attempted to utter a word. As if this her own wise resolution had so far succeeded, the effusion gradually became less and less ; and finally ceased altogether ; and when it had done so for a few minutes, she looked up once more to Beatrice, and putting out her feeble hand, she drew her closer to her, and after an effort or two, in a low, cautious, scarcely audible voice, she said

“As you value your husband’s life not a word of the cause—of—of this ;—Adelaida, do you hear me ?—Remember—your oath—to obey me—and —tell Rosaura—and—and all”—and closing her eyes, she allowed them then to lay her down, evidently exhausted by the effort. Beatrice burst into tears, the first she had shed for many years. She still held her sister’s hand, and now she covered it with kisses. Bianca suffered her to do so unresistingly—nay, as if she felt a celestial pleasure in those signs of softness ; and she took the occasion to repeat—“make them all promise.”

“We do—we do all promise, dearest, dearest lady !” exclaimed Adelaida ; and, with the effort of answering, losing her self-control, she was obliged to rush from the room, in order to prevent the loudness of her despairing sobs from overwhelming the invalid. As if it had been decreed that Bianca should have time for her generous exhortations, they were no sooner uttered than Visconti’s step was heard upon the stairs. Bianca immediately recognised it, and made a sign to his wife to go and meet him ; and then—then—came the fearful explanation at once of his scared appearance the day before, and of Ubaldino’s frenzy.

CHAPTER X.

GENIVRA had waited, in a state of maddening impatience, for a letter from him whom she still called and thought of as the Troubadour, which was to refute all that had been said ; to assure her that what was, was not ; and to bid her come to him — she asked no more — but so much she felt to be indispensable. But day after day passed over and no letter came, and her impatience, her tremendous anxiety was beginning to threaten both her health and reason — she ceased to eat—she ceased to sleep.

She drank wine in unusual quantities, at once to satisfy the cravings of feverish exhaustion, which yet rejected food, and as a temporary luller of fears and feelings that were becoming intolerable. Her usually clear, healthful, beautiful colour deepened to a feverish flush ; and her eyes grew restless and almost wild-looking, as their sockets seemed to recede. At last she

came to a sort of decision with herself, such as is not uncommon to strong, ardent minds, run to waste for want of cultivation. It was to decide arbitrarily on the time she would wait for a letter. That which she fixed on was eight days, and if in that time neither letter nor message should arrive, then — and she left the alternative unuttered even to herself.

In the mean time, the discussion as to the exile of Lancia had come to its termination, and when the decree was made known to him it wanted exactly one day of the eight which Genivra had given herself to suffer. When she was informed of it, she started up in a sort of wild ecstasy—

“And whither shall we go? and whither shall we go, ser?” she asked.

“To our mountains, my love; to our own old castle. It is gracious in him not to have prohibited even that.”

“But not until to-morrow? — we do not set out until to-morrow?” she said, rather in the tone of a command than an inquiry.

“No; he has mercifully allowed us twenty-four hours. Ha! ha! ha! enough for serfs like us to pack up our tatters; eh! Genivra, my girl?

That time will suffice for you, will it not, to put up all your pretty gew-gaws ? ”

It is impossible that pen or pencil could do justice to the unconscious grace and beauty of the look and attitude with which Genivra received these latter inquiries. She happened to be standing up, and, as her grand-uncle proceeded, she laid her hands one within the other, and unconsciously leaned her head a little to one side, as with an expression which, though proceeding from the calm of despair, compassionating only those who suffered for her, in that young, bright, beautiful face looked almost like mirth, she said—

“ Ah, poor ser ! my gew-gaws ? poor, poor ser ! ”

“ Never mind, my child ! ” he replied, evidently mistaking what was passing in her mind ; “ all will go better than you think ; when things are at the worst they mend.”

The next morning, Genivra made her appearance in her riding-dress. There was a considerable appearance of flutter and excitement in her manner, and her face was more flushed than was its wont. She had not seen Buonconte since the evening of the *dénouement*, but she seemed to

have forgotten that circumstance, and without even observing that he saluted her, she was about to place herself at the table, where a slight refreshment was prepared but, starting back, as if at the sight of food, she grasped her hand hysterically on her throat, and cried out aloud—

“I cannot!—I cannot eat—I cannot go, ser! I cannot do any thing until I know the truth! do not then deceive me any longer! Buonconte, it is useless—and you will all repent it if you do so! Tell me then, tell me truly—but only what I ask—no more, mind!” and she held up her little hand, authoritatively. “Has *nothing* more been heard of—of him?”

“*Nothing*,” repeated Buonconte, with the firmness of truth, “except in his public character.”

“It *was* then *he?*” she asked, the flush fading from her cheek.

“*It was*. How could you—”

“Enough!—I forbid you to say more,” and she leaned back a moment in her chair.

“My child! my child!” cried the old man, “you are not able for this journey; there is no necessity for it—you are not exiled; stay with your uncle Lanfranchi.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” she laughed, ironically. “No

necessity for it ?—eh ! Yes, there is a necessity for it,” then looking steadily a moment at her uncle, she suddenly rose, and throwing herself into his arms, she gave way to such overwhelming weeping as is rarely indulged in after childhood : sobbing out at intervals,—

“ Oh ! poor, poor ser ! ”

The old man wept with her, although he was far from entering into the depth of her feelings ; and even the young warrior, Buonconte, looked not on unmoved.

“ I will accompany you to your house,” he whispered to Lancia. “ The Countess Genivra is not well, and I may be useful on the road.”

“ Yes, yes, do come with us ; poor, good Buonconte ! ” she said, looking up eagerly from her uncle’s shoulder ; “ You will be *very* useful to him. Oh, yes, come ! your father expects you ; but he will forgive you for a day’s delay for *me*,” and she suffered a sunbeam-smile to appear through her tears. “ I am much better now ; it is the first time I have cried since that evening ; but no matter ! You shall see—you shall all see —*he* shall see what is Genivra ! Come, Buonconte ! put me on my dear Sultan,” for so she called her favourite steed ; and nature or art

could scarcely furnish a more beautiful combination than her light graceful form upon that faultless Arab, so suited to her in size, age, grace, and spirit, that they gave one the idea of having lived in the wildness of nature together just long enough to imbibe its perfection, ere being transplanted together into civilised life. She never approached the animal without its recognising her and putting its face up against hers, rather with the caressing manner of a dog than of a horse ; and, as it did so now, the unfortunate girl throwing her arms round its head, kissed it repeatedly with a sort of transport, and again burst into passionate weeping. They drew her back into the house, and again both Lancia and Buonconte endeavoured to dissuade her from attempting the journey that day ;—they even proposed asking permission of the Senate, for the former to defer his departure until the morrow, but they spoke to the winds,—

“ No—no ! not a day—not an hour ! I have already delayed too long ; and as you love me, do not contradict me any more !”

Again she dried her tears, and they set out on their way towards Pistoja. At first the air and her favourite exercise seemed to have a favour-

able effect on Genivra's spirits, but it was temporary, and she soon fell into a state of abstraction which only gave way occasionally to a kind of wild and seemingly intolerable excitement, which induced her to whip her horse into a gallop ; and when she had gone miles ahead of her companions, to pace slowly back towards them. At length they arrived at the river Cecina, which they were in the habit of passing on horseback. They found it still extremely swollen and agitated from the effects of the recent *burrasca*, which had not subsided there as quickly as in the plains, and the mountain *débris* had not yet ceased descending the river as it is wont to do on such occasions.

Arrived on the near bank, Lancia and Buonconte, at the same moment, pronounced it impossible to pass, and were just about to discuss what it was best to do instead, when Genivra, uttering once more a wild hysterical laugh, which even in that unsuspecting moment struck them as extraordinary, exclaimed, "What ! an old admiral and a young soldier afraid of a swollen stream ! Take example, then, from a girl's courage !" and, before it was possible to put out a hand to arrest her, her beautiful bay Arab, uttering, indeed, a snort

of remonstrance, but obeying her spur, plunged into the foaming water.

There was an universal shout of horror from masters and attendants ; and Lancia and Buonconte, and one faithful groom, plunged in after her ; their heavy horses, with their accoutrements, were able to keep their feet, and to resist the stream, although utterly incapable of an effort beyond that, while—alas ! and woe, alas !—the light Arab was soon, not only swimming, but battling with, and presently yielding to, the rushing element ; and, whatever might have been the unfortunate girl's intentions, or whatever she might have believed to be her own courage, no sooner did she feel and see death whirling towards her in the shape of that raging water, than she shrieked — the shriek that already was scarcely of this world—“Ser ! ser ! Buonconte ! save me !—save me !—I am carried away ! Oh, my—” and human ears never heard another sound from that ringing voice, nor learned what that one object was, which, in that fearful hour, seemed dearer than her own life !

We drop the veil.

When the Archbishop received the letter which Bianca sent him, inclosing one for Ubaldino,

he felt an emotion of pleasure, which he scarcely ever expected to have felt again ; for, notwithstanding the outward appearance of calm, almost of apathy which he had assumed ever since the fatal battle, which appeared to some the effect of religious reflection, to others as dissimulation, and to many as premature failing of the intellect, he himself knew and dreaded it as that calm which precedes the storm, or the volcanic irruption.

He felt awful threatenings within himself — he felt passions wakening, one by one, which had long slept ; and he trembled — sometimes corporeally trembled—as he contemplated alone, at the mid-hour of night, the possibility of one spark more being applied to or falling amongst them ; or one moment's additional weakness causing them to escape from his control.

He received Bianca's generous present, then, not as, perhaps, he would have received it in other times, with a disinterested resolution to suffer, and let his nephew suffer, rather than permit such a sacrifice on her part — for he guessed almost to precision how she had managed to elude the obstacles which he had long known, with nervous instinct, her grandfather had thrown in her way ; but with that humiliating sense of

necessity, to avert worse consequences, which puts to flight the nobler and more independent sentiments, one by one, until proud man is reduced to a being depending upon other men, not alone for his food, but for his soul ! Oh ! for this reason let no one despise the advantages of birth, rank, wealth — all that leads to independence ; nor be too severe on those deprived of such advantages and all that they involve. It is true it has been written, that it is hard for the rich man to gain heaven, but it is because so much is required of him, for the glorious opportunities and means bestowed upon him ; while— who can doubt it ?—little, in comparison, will be required of, and much pardoned to those to whom such have been denied.

The Archbishop, then, availed himself of Bianca's assignment, as one who had no longer the right to refuse aught that might tend to the tranquillising of his own passions — but less for himself than for others. He did not, however, send forward her inclosure for Ubaldino. He knew more than was supposed of how Ubaldino had spent his evenings during her illness ; but he also knew — for when was a person in his position and with his acuteness ignorant of

what was passing around him? — of Genivra's passion for the Troubadour; and he calculated with all the judgment allowed to man, that letting him proceed until the cure should reach him from herself, it would be infinitely more radical than if effected by any restraint which he might impose upon him. His capture, and the discovery of the real character of the Troubadour, however, defeated these calculations; the Archbishop knew his nephew's character as well as the most overweening partiality and doting affection could allow him to know it; that is, of every fault and every weakness he caught a glimpse and then shut his eyes; while on every virtue — and they were many — he gazed until they became a part of sight itself, and cast their colouring over all.

But still he had caught a faint glimpse of Ubaldino's weakness of purpose, and he knew, as has been said, that he was dazzled, nay, entranced, by Genivra; but he also knew the generosity of his feelings; and when he was about to return to Pisa to learn that Genivra was abandoned by the Neapolitan ambassador — for that, in the world's morality, was very different from being discarded by the nameless troubadour, and

banished into exile for faults in which she had no part — the Archbishop guessed, perhaps felt, that the mere fact of Bianca's money having been applied, even by her own exertions, to procure his release would not, to a dazzled imagination, weigh against these opportunities for proving to Genivra what he felt towards her only too fervently.

The Archbishop saw, in short, that the time was come for speaking seriously to his nephew upon the subject ; and explaining to him that he must either resolve to restore to Bianca her faith and take back his own—a procedure which in Italy is considered only second to breaking the marriage vow—and, so doing, return her money even at the risk of his own ruin and that of his family, or give such proofs as should satisfy him, the Archbishop, that he was, not only repentant, but radically cured of his dishonourable passion for Genivra ; under these circumstances, then, he believed that Bianca's letter was better detained in order to be presented by himself—as, if kind, it would add double force to his arguments, coming contemporaneously with them—or if, as he feared, having heard of his defection, she had written to reproach him, it was still more neces-

sary that Ubaldino should not receive that additional excuse—in a lover's code of morals—for withdrawing from her, until his uncle should have spoken with him upon the subject. The calculations were formed judiciously, as far as is permitted to man; but, alas! how limited is that permission! Alas! for the presumption with which we use it.

Ubaldino was released, and returned to Pisa ; but he had scarcely arrived within the gates when, meeting with some acquaintances, he perceived by the manner of their congratulations, by the half-commenced and suddenly checked communication, and by many other indefinable symptoms, that there was some mystery, some concealment, some management to be observed on a subject in which he was evidently supposed to be deeply interested ; he inquired, insisted, and finally learned that Lancia had been banished ; and having set out with his grand niece and Buonconte for Pistoja, news had arrived the day before, but his informant could not tell how, that in attempting to cross the river Cecina, swollen by the floods, the lovely young girl, whose beauty was looked upon as something giving universal interest, and as shedding a new light, of

whatever kind it might be, upon their city, had been drowned, and that her body, and that of her horse, had been carried down the stream to the open sea. As will be readily supposed, her unfortunate lover's brain reeled under the influence of this intelligence.

He threw himself from his horse, and, as soon as he could speak, asked for further particulars. None could be afforded. Ugolino, though absent, had, they scrupled not to assert, compassed the banishment of Lancia, who had gone the evening before : that morning the report was spread, but nothing more was known.

Ubaldino caught at the word “report,” which was this time used, accidentally, by his informant, instead of the word news ; for we do not seek more anxiously to avoid death than despair ; and, by a train of reasoning which, at first, he suggested as barely possible, but which he ended in persuading himself was self-evident, he came to the conclusion that the whole had been a plot got up by Ugolino and his family, to sever him from Genivra, and to hurry on the match with Bianca. He scarcely stopped to think whether or not Bianca herself was, or could be, concerned in such a plot. Why ? Alas ! because at that

moment he little cared ; all he said to himself for rushing, in the state of frenzy we have seen, to her presence was, that if she was not in the plot she would now assist him, convinced at last of the hopelessness of his passion—if she were, that she deserved all he intended to say to her ! With this desperate decision he arrived at Visconti's house exactly at the moment that the two vacant litters were being borne from the door. The mode of conveyance was sufficiently unusual to attract his attention, and to excite conjecture even in his calmest mood. For one, perhaps, he could have accounted, by Bianca's illness ; but as nothing could be less adapted to Beatrice's habits, even had he known of their absence from Pisa, he would, at that moment, have taxed any one with falsehood who had asserted that she had occupied the other. In this spirit he flew upon the bearers, and, in a voice which was imperious from the apprehension of deception, desired to know whom they had just deposited in that house.

Those—and I was once among them—who believe that the Italians, in general, submit readily to insult or rudeness are under a great mistake. The stranger's gold may make them sometimes smother their resentment on cool, sober

calculation — as I believe many among ourselves are known to do upon occasion—but the comparatively familiar intercourse between the classes of the natives necessarily renders that intercourse more *human*, if I may so express myself. I do not mean more humane, for whatever may have been the origin of these two words, with us they have branched off into different meanings: I mean literally more as if all were equally human beings, instead of one part being machines, the other managers. Nor do I here mean to enter into a discussion as to which system has the most beneficial results upon society in general, whether the lower class approximate more to the upper, or the upper to the lower, especially as I have ventured to touch upon this subject in another place better calculated for it; I merely mean to say that it was not the least strange, especially at a moment when the lower classes had had a signal success over the upper, in the matter of the Anziani, that the men to whom Ubaldino had addressed his imperious inquiry, instead of satisfying him, desired him to ask at the house for the information he required, as they were not the servants. We all know what trifles serve to confirm already conceived

prepossessions. Ubaldino, unconscious of the excitement of his own manner, only read in this answer fidelity to the instructions they had received, and the house-door being still unclosed since the return of the ladies, he entered, and rushed up the stairs unannounced in the manner we have described.

The news of Genivra's death had reached Pisa the day before, just as Visconti was setting out for Alto-Pascia ; but, knowing the gentleness of his sister's feelings, he deemed it better not to communicate it to her until she should be re-established at Pisa, where it might be broken to her by degrees, the servants having been all cautioned not to allude to it in her presence. He concealed it also from his wife, partly in his new-born solicitude for her health, and partly in order to spare her the unnecessary pain of acting under restraint with Bianca.

Such was the explanation he now gave her, when, by Bianca's desire, she met him on the stairs and accompanied him into another room for the purpose. Ineffably shocked both at what she had heard and what she had to impart, she felt that there was no longer reason for concealing from her husband, even had it been possible, the man-

ner in which his affectionate precautions had been defeated.

It would be impossible to do justice to, or to analyse the feelings with which Nino Visconti received this communication. His nature, like his sister's, was gentle and even tender ; but this was a trial which few would have been able to resist, and the roused anger of a man usually gentle is often terrible. His mind ran, in one agonized moment, over the principal circumstances of his sister's life ; her peculiar character, her talents, her piety, her predilection for a convent life, her sacrifice of that predilection first to his, and then to another's wishes, her short-lived hope and happiness, and now the outrage committed against her feelings, and the fearful end of all.

"Oh, no ! no ! I cannot—cannot forgive him ! he must, he shall pay me the ransom of his own worthless life—the senseless, soulless idiot ! and, if he pays it not readily, I shall tear his false heart from his bosom and fling it palpitating at his feet."

He had scarcely pronounced the words when the physician was announced ; and Beatrice went to meet and conduct him to the patient's couch,

for Nino's state prevented him from accompanying them.

His visit was a short one, and, on leaving the saloon, he asked to see Visconti; and then, with all the sympathy and compassion which the circumstances called for, he gave him to understand that earthly skill could not prolong his sister's life beyond a few days. He added, that she desired to be removed to her own room, but that the utmost precaution must be observed even in allowing that slight exertion, and that the less she moved, or spoke, the more hours she might be permitted to count.

"Hours!" repeated her brother, pale and aghast.

"I said hours, my lord, but days are, you know, composed of hours; it is just one of those cases that a moment might terminate, or that might linger for a few days."

"But—"

"Impossible, Podestà! I never deceive—prepare yourself as a man and a Christian!"

Visconti wrung his hand in sign of adieu, and then he threw himself across the bed, and gave himself up for a few minutes to an agony of despair; for, with the certainty of losing her

who had been the object, the friend, the second self of almost his whole life—at least of hers ;—every thought they had exchanged, every feeling they had participated, every pleasure enjoyed, every pain suffered together—and the latter were many ; and, perhaps, the most attaching of all his recollections — all her virtues — all her graces—her very beauty rose up before him ; and, as he dwelt upon them, one by one, the shock subsided to give place to softer feelings, which, at last, happily found relief in such convulsive weeping as only those can know who have received intelligence such as that he had just received.

When Beatrice returned she found him in this state ; and, throwing herself into his arms, perhaps for the first time they mingled their sobs and tears, and they felt their hearts were drawn closer together than they had ever been before. That feeling, mercifully sent at that moment, brought comfort with it ; and, soon after, Beatrice ventured to suggest to her husband, that Bianca must begin to suspect the cause of his delay if more prolonged, and that she was anxious to be removed to her room.

Nino shuddered to think what might be the

effect of anxiety, or even a wish delayed, on the precious life now hanging by a thread ; and, calling upon the energies of manhood, and the forgetfulness of self, which such a position required, he sent Beatrice to say, that no one must attempt to move her without his being present ; while he walked up and down the room for a few minutes, cleared his voice in order that she might not perceive in it traces of his emotion, uttered a short prayer, and then entered the saloon where Bianca lay.

His intention was, like that of almost every one visiting an invalid for the first time, to endeavour to cheer her, even with false hopes ; but no sooner had he approached her couch than the influence of that spirit of truth and confidence which had ever subsisted between them, and the angelically expressive smile which said to him, as plainly as words could have said, that that spirit was not now to be laid aside, deprived him of all will or power to attempt dissimulation ; and, therefore, taking the hand she put out to him, he folded it between both his, and bowed his forehead over them. There was silence for a few minutes, and then Bianca said,

“ Weep, dearest Nino, weep, if that will relieve

you ; it will do me good also. I know you will be sorry to lose me ; but it will comfort you to remember what I now declare to you with my dying breath—nay, shrink not from the word, my own brother, you see I do not,—I declare to you that I go willingly-- gladly—and that my only regret is for you, and even that is little now ; yes, dearest Nino, it is very little, for though you will suffer a good deal, especially during these my last hours— when all is over, when hope and fear alike are gone, your thoughts will turn to the babe that is about to be given to you in mercy, as I love to believe, to replace me a thousand fold to you ;—you will be surprised to find yourself before long smilingly describing to her or him aunt Bianca. Nay, nay, brother, I pray God it may be so !—the smile will not be one of forgetfulness of *me*, but of *sorrow* ; you will forget your sorrow, but you will remember *me*, and you will teach your child to love my memory. I know it—I know it ; nay, dear, let me speak yet a little longer. I remained silent in order to be able to speak when you should arrive ; had the doctor said there was hope, by my still remaining silent, to save my life—I say to *save*, as we are wont to say—

though I always disliked the word, as if it were to be lost by receiving immortality ! but, if he had said so, I should have remained silent still ; but, as there are cases in which we are allowed, not only to risk our lives, but to go to meet certain death, I cannot think I am called on to suppress all that may comfort you and others for the chance of remaining a few hours longer upon earth. You hear, Nino ? I said you and *others* —yes ! there is another being of whom I must say a few words, to be repeated to him for his consolation ; but—strange—how Nature deceives one ! I am not conscious now of any feeling of either love, or hatred, or resentment towards him ; — and yet — something like — pride — offended, I suppose — has given me — a little —oh, dear Nino, raise me ! ” And her brother caught her in his arms, as he believed, to receive her last breath. It was not so, however, nor was it even a return of the effusion of blood, but seemed merely a nervous agitation which appeared to threaten her with suffocation for a moment. When it subsided, she whispered that she wished to be removed to her own room, adding, “ I will not speak any more at present. I must keep what breath remains for Fra Tom-

maso—he is long in coming—perhaps after that—we shall see—but the most necessary first!"—She was carried to her chamber, undressed, and placed in bed without any worse effects than increased exhaustion, which induced her to close her eyes and lie perfectly still for more than half-an-hour. Other physicians arrived in the meantime, but having seen and conversed with the first, and with Beatrice and Nino, they did not even go through the form of seeing the invalid, so clearly hopeless was the case from the symptoms described. At last Fra Tommaso arrived; and after remaining alone with her for half-an-hour, he joined Visconti and Beatrice in the saloon where they were waiting for his re-appearance. There was a fixed but sanctified melancholy upon his fine countenance, when he entered with a slow and noiseless step.

"There is no hope, father?" Beatrice murmured with that nervous anxiety that will hear every one's opinion.

"None of her remaining amongst us," he replied; for the more intelligent amongst the ecclesiastics in those days, as occasionally in the present, united a good deal of the medical knowledge gained by experience in sick rooms, to that

more immediately belonging to their own professions ; “but beware how you weep for her !” he said, solemnly,—“beware how you weep, that she is called at once and directly to the full fruition of bliss !—her spirit is already amongst the blessed !”

“She is not dead ?” hastily exclaimed Beatrice.

“No, her body is still living, but her spirit is purified within it. I never saw such another death-bed ! She charged me to take your promise, both of you, to forget the immediate cause of her removal—to forgive him, in order to give her right to pray for yourselves in heaven : these were her words.”

Nino Visconti again burst into tears.

“You say truly, father,” he sobbed forth ; “there never was another like her !”

“Yes, but that is not enough—that will not content a beatified spirit. Exhausted as she is, she has extracted a promise from me that if I could not prevail with you, I should return and tell her so, in order, as she said, that she might exert her last breath in beseeching you to suffer her spirit to depart in peace. ‘I am the original cause of all !’ she exclaimed ; ‘had I been firm at first to my intentions of celibacy, none of

this would have occurred—and oh ! let us not think to justify ourselves by our *intentions* when we dare to step aside from prescribed rules ! I had promised to God in my heart, I never should have allowed myself to be flattered into recalling that vow. A vow is a thing done — other things are done in consequence of it, and no one can ever say how much may be set wrong by a broken vow. Oh ! tell Nino — tell my brother not to let the crime of vengeance — perhaps—oh, God !—of murder—be added to that for which I already have to answer ? These were her words, Podestà,—Will you disregard them ? ”

Nino was agitated with strong emotion.

“ *She* is an angel, father ! I am a sinful man, and perhaps—”

“ And do you premeditatedly mean to render yourself more so ? ”

“ But, father, vengeance in some cases is not only permitted, but—”

“ By whom ? ”

“ Let me ask, are you aware of *all*?—of the letter ; for I consider that far worse than the raving of his frenzy, however more terrible the immediate effects of the latter.”

“ I am aware of *all*, and so is she ; yet she

forgives—Christ was aware of all when he forgave his slayers. “Lady,” continued the friar, turning to Beatrice, “join your voice to mine—your sister tells me you have hopes of becoming a mother—she told me in order that if my voice should fail I should call upon you to ask mercy and forgiveness for the man she has loved, in the name of the innocent being yet unborn, as a first boon from its father !”

“Oh, say no more!—say no more!” exclaimed Visconti, in an agony of emotion:—“Who could resist such a being? Tell her, tell her, father, I forgive him, as I hope to be forgiven !”

The friar raised his eyes to heaven, withdrew, did his mission to Bianca in a smiling whisper, and retired to bid another departing soul good speed upon the great and mysterious journey.

Visconti and Beatrice immediately proceeded to Bianca’s room; but the faithful Adelaida, who, the picture of woeful consternation, was seated beside her bed, made signs to them that she already slept, and they withdrew to offer to each other all the consolation the melancholy circumstances admitted of.

CHAPTER XI.

IN about half an hour, however, they were considerably surprised by the arrival of the Archbishop. He had long ceased visiting them, or going into society at all, although he had frequently sent to inquire for Bianca ; and Nino shuddered lest this visit, so quickly succeeding the fatal one of his nephew, should be the precursor of a fresh scene of agitation : respect for his position, however, rendered it impossible to refuse to see him, and he was accordingly shown up stairs.

The first glance at his countenance would have disarmed the most fierce and well-founded anger, yet it formed a curious contrast with that of the sainted man who had recently departed. The countenance of Fra Tommaso was pale, subdued, and sorrowful ; but through that clear paleness and that sorrowful expression itself, one read that all was peace within ; it was an

expression of sorrow, but of sorrow that was the harbinger of joy ; sorrow that could not eat into the secret sources of comfort treasured in the recesses of the pious heart ; sorrow that sought not concealment, for it was for others, and therefore its place was on the countenance and in the manner — open, unfeigned, sympathetic ; one of earth's cordials — almost duties — ready to be offered to all when the occasion should require ; while that of the Archbishop — oh, no ! the most unsympathising could not have called that expression simply sorrow — could not have believed there was peace within.

Neither was his countenance pale ; at least, if in general it might be said to be so, there was, once more, under either eye, that burning fever-spot that was visible on the morning of Ugolino's departure ; and that was with him the sign of such mental disturbance as extended even to his robust and unimpaired bodily powers. His manner and expression were, alike, those of a man struggling with himself to conceal rather than to subdue an overpowering affliction, and if he excited infinitely more compassion than Fra Tommaso, no one would have presumed to offer him his sympathy.

When Visconti and his wife went forward to receive him, he hastened to say—

“Do not deem my visit as obtrusive and ill-timed as it would appear; it is to the Lady Bianca—Will she see me?

“Your Eminence knows—”

“Yes, yes. I know all. I know *all*—it is for that I am here. My unfortunate, condemned, and self-condemned relative is now shut up in my house. You will understand, then, that I know all. And *yet* I ask to see the victim if it be possible.”

“I—I—the least agitation—might be—I believe she sleeps at this moment,” stammered forth her brother.

“Perhaps my mere presence will not agitate her; and I do not come for discussion. But I am aware that there is a sort of satisfaction attached to my administering any sacrament; if she would feel it so I am here to offer it—that is all; and if she really sleeps, I will either wait or return.”

Not only Nino, but Beatrice herself were deeply affected by this proposal, on the part of the Archbishop, and not the less that they felt it came as a sort of expiatory offering from that haughty spirit, and just as Beatrice was about to say she

would inquire whether her sister had shown signs of wakening, Adelaida appeared to announce that she had wakened after a quiet slumber—seemed better, and desired to see her and Nino.

“Tell her that I am here,” the Archbishop said to Nino; “but give her to understand, as you think best, that I do not wish to touch upon the past.”

The moment, however, that Bianca heard of his arrival, she showed signs of lively joy.

“Curious!” she added; “I had just been wishing it were possible to see him; but, even if I could have presumed to have sent for him, I feared that, perhaps, before he might arrive—but now I feel better—that sleep has done me good. Nay, dearest, dearest Nino! you are not such a—goose, shall I say? as to hope that I mean other good than allowing me to speak a little longer? Oh, how good God is to me in every way! Dear Nino, wait one instant. Did Fra Tommaso give my message to you and Beatrice?”

“Yes, dearest love, he did.”

“And you both promised; even Beatrice?”

“Could you doubt—any wish of yours—”

“Thanks—thanks! No, I did not doubt *you*, and I will tell Beatrice that my spirit shall whis-

per her little one to remind her whenever she is inclined to forget. Now send the Archbishop to me, for I must not exhaust myself beforehand—but I feel very happy! I had lovely dreams!” and her poor brother fled and was obliged to wait some minutes to recover himself before he could reappear in the saloon.

The Archbishop, seemed to receive a momentary satisfaction in hearing of her desire to see him; and approached her bedside with less constraint in his manner than he had hitherto exhibited. They were left *tête-à-tête* as was the etiquette; and Bianca, without a moment’s hesitation, and with a manner almost more playful than was her wont, even in health, said,

“ If I guess right, Monsignore, we are about to change characters for a moment; and, instead of my being your penitent—for the dear, good, Fra Tommaso has just confessed me—you are to become mine!” and she fixed her sweet, smiling eyes upon him. The Archbishop was taken unawares by this address and manner, so different from what he expected; and certainly for the first time in his life, beside a sick-bed, found himself at a loss how to answer.

“ Nino told me,” she went on, “ that you did

not intend speaking to me of the past, but it is precisely of that I wish to speak. I tried to speak to Nino, but human weakness, perhaps life, was, even then still too strong within me ; another hour has gone by—I am so much nearer to eternity ; and I have conversed with the dear frate, and now I feel quite equal and desirous to speak with you, Monsignore, about what is uppermost in the minds of both, and you must please to speak to me frankly and tell me all. Forget that I was so lately only a young, silly girl, and treat me as a departing soul, that feels, or fancies something of the light of Heaven has already penetrated through the attenuated earthly covering : look, Monsignore, how my hands are already clarified !—and why should it not be so ?” she said, with an increasing energy, which was doubtless partly the effect of fever. “ What is it prevents our seeing all things in their true colours, but the passions, wishes, temptations, hopes, and fears of the world ? When these have lost their force—*really* lost it, as with the dying they must, one ought to be able to see clearly, and to be listened to with respect, even though the body be that of a girl or a child ; for spirits have no sex or age. Is it not so, Monsignore ?”

"I listen to you as to an angel," he said, with admiring fervency.

"Then you will *obey* me?" she said, still playfully. "You see I will not relinquish any prerogative you assign me."

"What do you desire?—you have only to command me."

"I desire, then," — and in her eagerness she raised herself on her elbow, although obliged immediately to lie down again, — "I desire, then, that you will make Ubaldino happy!"

The Archbishop started; from her preceding discourse he had anticipated some allusion to his nephew, perhaps, even, that Bianca would intimate her forgiveness; but that she should be thus anxious to solicit his indulgence towards Ubaldino, on the very point for which she lay dying, in all her youth and beauty, he had not anticipated.

"Where is Ubaldino?" she went on, without waiting for an answer to the request which she perceived had astonished him.

In a low, subdued tone, and, with his eyes cast on the ground, he informed her that he was at the Archiepiscopal Palace, in a state of dreadful anguish.

“ What for ? ” she asked. “ Because he thinks, perhaps, he has caused my death ? —you must disabuse him of that idea, Monsignore. It is chiefly for this I wished to see you ; the seeds of my death have been long sown. I never was robust ; my father and mother both died young ; the first stroke of my malady was given the evening of the public funerals, when I was *so* happy in Ubaldino’s goodness ; be sure you tell him so, Monsignore,—will you not ? for it is but just. The second and much heavier stroke was by my own perverseness, in lingering on the road against old Lorenzo’s cautions when on my way to Santa Croce. Nino—every one, can confirm this ; and if the journey hither, or to Santa Croce, would not have caused the rupture of this vessel in the lungs—you see how wise I am in every way—it would inevitably have happened at the very first agitation, unless, indeed, I had been doomed to the far, far worse fate of a lingering death by consumption—a burden to myself and all my friends. Oh ! how I bless God it has been directed otherwise ! and though I say all this most truly, as I shall have to answer, perhaps, this very evening, yet remember, Monsignore, I say it to be repeated to Ubaldino. I know him now—

and I know that this will, at first, have more effect in calming and consoling him, than aught else that even you could urge."

"He deserves neither calm nor consolation!" the Archbishop said, in a low, hoarse, solemn tone.

Again the poor invalid raised herself for a moment on her elbow.

"Oh, do not say so!—do not say so, Monsignore! do not let my dying senses be offended by such words!—they ill become one sinner to another. Yes, Monsignore;" and she laid her feeble hand upon his, which happened to be resting on her bed—"yes, you look astonished, and you must feel offended at my presuming to utter such words to you; but, oh! remember what you have promised me; not to think of me as a young girl, but as a departing soul, one calling almost from another world; to such all is pardoned, all is permitted; may I, then, speak freely just what comes into my mind? for, do you know, Monsignore, I have often reflected a great deal. In my convent I used to reflect on all I saw and all I heard when visiting with my grandfather, and latterly, again, I have reflected a great deal,—whether well or ill I cannot be sure of,—but I

will tell you what I have sometimes thought,—that you and my grandfather are not really friends."

Here again the Archbishop started and looked his astonishment, not, as may be supposed, at the idea, but at its coming thus from her.

"I may, as I said, be mistaken," she continued, "especially on such subjects; but it appears, and has long appeared to me, that there is some confusion, some want of the right feeling, the right principle between you on the subject of this poor country. I sometimes fear that my grandfather—especially since his return from Florence;—but oh! if it be so, Archbishop—if he be tempted by ambition to the brink of the precipice—oh do not you—you, who are so clear-sighted, who have so much power, so much influence, do not stand aside in order to let him fall into it; put out your hand while there is yet time to save him and to save the country. Remember your position!—remember all that will be required at your hands!"

The Archbishop continued to gaze on her, and almost began to believe that the light she spoke of had shone into her soul, so unusual was it, at that time, for a young girl to think, or if she thought,

to venture to speak such things to one like him.
After a few moments' silence—

" You do not answer me," she said, almost pleadingly : " have I tried your patience too far ? And yet methinks it ought not to be so. For what is it I have asked ? That you would, in saving my grandfather from himself, save the country whose spiritual head you are."

" But if they are incompatible ? " almost whispered the Archbishop at last ; " if he will not be saved on those conditions ? "

" Oh do not say so ! —do not think so ! We never, *never* ought to think that of each other ! Who could ever have imagined the thousand ways the Almighty takes to turn our hearts ; and just before you came, I began to think that my death might be a sort of bond between you. Perhaps he has heard—though never, never from us—of poor Ubaldino's not being able to fulfil his engagement with me—and that, you know, to a man like him ! I have sometimes thought it must be so, by his coolness about raising that money ! If it be so, my being out of the way will soften matters, if those who are in the secret of the apparent cause will only mercifully preserve it, as Fra Tommaso has promised me to endeavour to

enforce. If he were here, I think I should almost venture to speak to him, though with less hope than to you, Monsignore ; and indeed he is less responsible, for he has not taken upon him to be the teacher and the example of others, and will not hereafter be called upon for an account of his flock. Oh, my good, noble Archbishop ! I see you are now really listening to me ; I see the colour rising over your face—and I know it is not of anger!"

"No, my sweetest young friend ! it is anything you please, except anger. I said truly when I said I listen to you as an angel."

" You will then fulfil the compact you have made with God ?" she cried, with joyous animation ; " you will faithfully discharge the high duties you have undertaken, to the exclusion of some one else who would, perhaps, have fulfilled them ? You promise me you will unite yourself sincerely with my poor grandfather and try to save him ? Remember, oh remember ! he has an immortal soul, and that you will be required one day to say whether you have done all in your power to save it ! Do you promise me ?"

" You have forgotten to urge the strongest reason of all," the Archbishop answered in emo-

tion, but an emotion mingled with bitter and even angry mortification. "You have forgotten that your present state, and its cause, for ever changes the relative position of your grandfather and myself. I am become, by means of my hapless nephew, his debtor, of a debt, which it is utterly impossible I can ever pay!" and his countenance changed almost to fierceness.

"Oh, do not look!—do not speak thus—for God's sake, for my sake, for your soul's sake, do not feel thus," Bianca, ardently pleaded. "If, indeed, you could view the fact of poor Ubaldino's having been made the instrument of hastening my death, perhaps, a few days, as a softening tie or bond between you and my poor grandfather; but, no, no! you ought to have higher and better motives; you are capable of them; and he—he, poor man, would not, I fear, let that one exist. Archbishop, you will have to manage much with him—for I think—I think, as I said, he had cooled, of late, towards Ubaldino. I do not think he tried all he could for his return, and, I have thought, since *that* letter, that perhaps, my grandfather knew more than I did of Ubaldino's real feelings, and that the Count Lancia's banishment

—But let us leave all such conjectures—only promise me you will act the part of a Christian by him, and on Christian principles, whatever may be your provocations to the contrary ; for I dread—I dread to think—should he have any suspicion—but you promise me, do you not ?”

“ You know not what you ask, Bianca, angel that you are !” the Archbishop said, in a low hollow tone ; for he felt that as he had never hated Ugolino until now, so none but the haughtiest feelings, spurning at the idea of owing aught to his even unconscious forbearance, could enable him to resist destroying him. “ All you say is true, but it is, as you have said, of the other world ; a spirit so pure as yours cannot know what you ask of a man like me !”

“ I do not ask it of you as a man,” she said, “ I ask it of you as an Archbishop—I ask it of you as one who has placed himself, or allowed himself to be placed above all others, except the Pope himself, in sign of his superior merits, as a fitting example to those who are desirous to be saved—as a living interpretation of the testament which our Lord Jesus has left us. Oh ! on what grounds are you above others in place,

and wealth, and influence ? What can excuse or account for that in a follower of him who had none, if it be not superior sanctity — superior goodness in the persons thus elevated ? Otherwise either the multitude must suppose a very low degree of these qualities will suffice for themselves, or they must despise the authority that awards such prerogatives to the unworthy ! and either conclusion is to peril many and many a soul who has no better test to go by ! ”

“ *Bianca !* ” the Archbishop said, “ it is impossible that these are your own reflections—all superior in talent and cultivation as I have long known you to be, these are not the reflections of your age or sex.”

“ And yet, they seem to me *so* simple, *so* natural ! and as if it were only when the truth has been corrupted and confused that such things become intricate or difficult to understand ! But I will tell you exactly how far they are my own : I inquired one day of Fra Tommaso, why he was so poor and lowly, and many other ecclesiastics so rich and powerful ; he answered me, that it was because of their superior merits ; and when I said that our Lord was poor, he said, yes, but

that our Lord had no need of riches to effect his purposes—that he and his immediate apostles had proofs so conspicuous to convince the world that they required no others; but that in the absence of direct communication with heaven and manifest powers and privileges conferred by God upon the deserving, men are obliged to have recourse to such inducements to virtue as come within their scope. And thus the attention of others are called to the example of one in a high and distinguished position, which would pass unheeded and unfollowed if not made conspicuous. This led me to think how great is the responsibility of those who set themselves up as that example, and accept the wages of superior goodness! But do you know I am becoming tired after all. O God, give me yet a little time, if it be thy holy will! Monsignore, will you really not promise me?"

"Bianca, we can no longer wonder that you are not permitted to linger here amongst us, so unworthy of you! Yes! my child, you have conquered. I hear God's voice in yours! I will endeavour to arrest your grandfather in the course he has taken. I do not promise you to succeed, for he is a man almost impossible to

win ; and I — Bianca — I am a wicked, wicked sinner ! Nay, my love, do not try to contradict me. The heart knoweth its own bitterness ; and I, knowing the bitterness of mine, have yielded to — nay nourished it of late ; the sweetness of your words have tempered it for the moment ; for a man must either feel them or prepare to deny, not alone his belief in revealed and natural religion, but to maintain that he is justified in taking the hard-earned soldi of the deluded multitude for teaching them lies ; and lies that, if they be lies, deprive them of the little enjoyment they might snatch in this world, by yielding to the passions, the desires, and the wants that nature has implanted in them. Oh, yes ! my young friend, an unbelieving teacher is a double thief of the worst kind ! Robbing the people of their money in payment for robbing them of their natural enjoyment ; and a teacher not acting up to his belief, in as far as weak human nature can, is still a thief, though not in the double sense. But he is a thief, for he takes wages for the task that he does not execute. Yes, Bianca, I repeat I have been — I am a gross sinner, and, at the same time, a most unhappy man. I was born with violent passions — there were no rational

means taken to subdue them, and I have been their victim in one form or other ever since. Respect for religion—respect for my character and position, aided, perhaps, by more individual motives or feelings, have enabled me to resist some, but then I rushed only the more furiously to others. This was not to be a man. The axe was not laid to the root—for passion is passion whatever form it may take. And when it carries a man beyond what, in his reasonable moments, he would wish to say or do, he has sinned. One form may have worse effects on others or on ourselves than another, and for this reason be more condemned by society; but these are ulterior considerations, the weakness, the sin is the same. We have suffered the brute nature to conquer the divine. We have been more beast than man. Yes! it is unworthy of a man ever to say, ‘I cannot help it!’ ‘I could not help it,’ in deep repentance, may be pardoned as a beacon for the future. But the man has lost all respect for himself who says, ‘I cannot help it.’ I have not sunk to this. But shall I fulfil the part of penitent you assigned me, and confess to you that I have seen, known, and felt that I was wandering, or rather starting from the character

I professed — that of a Christian pastor ; and yet I determined not to return until my own ends—not bad ones, however — should be accomplished. In this resolution, however, I did not, certainly, allow myself to reflect on all you have now said to me. I shut it out from my consideration—and that was a weakness ; nor does there live that being who would have dared to remind me of it but yourself — strange !—young girl as you are !”

“I do not live ! and I am not a young girl ; I am one honoured by an invitation from God !” said Bianca, smiling, but in a very faint exhausted voice.

“I have promised to a certain extent, and to a certain extent only ;” the Archbishop continued in the same tone of almost abstraction, as if conversing with new ideas wakened within him to his own astonishment ; “because I *will* maintain the promise I make—I, or mine, have deeply, dreadfully injured him ? I will endeavour to repair it, sincerely, conscientiously, as far as he will let me. I will endeavour to re-unite myself with him for the good of the country ; but I am, as I have said, a man accursed in the violence of my own passions, and, therefore, I *cannot* promise to succeed.”

" You will, you will ! I will pray for you where I am going!"

" Pray for me, and pray for him ! And now, my blessed angel, I will leave you ; you have exhausted your little strength, but I will not say you have wasted it ; and I will endeavour, I repeat, even for recollection, that it be not so ;" and he was rising to make his adieu, but Bianca with some effort besought him to delay a moment longer.

" You have not promised me that you will unite Ubaldino to the Contessa Genivra," she said.

The Archbishop shrank from the words, although he had been made aware of Bianca's ignorance of the catastrophe.

" The Contessa Genivra," he said, when he recovered himself, " is not a woman, in my opinion, to make a man happy."

" And I would not, therefore, ask you to marry her, nor even to select her for your nephew ; but now that his affections are so strongly fixed upon her—"

" Yes, but he would soon repent."

" Ah, we are not sure ; and what is a sober regulated regret in the calmer years of life, com-

pared to the breaking of the young ardent hopes of youth?—Oh! I think no one is ever so unhappy in their own way as in that forced on them by others, provided the immortal soul be not endangered. Oh! let him, let him be happy in his day of youth; perhaps his middle life may never come, and you may rescue her from a girlish love of admiration."

"But do you not know, my love, that she is gone with her uncle?"

"I know it, but Ubaldino can follow her;" and, again, the Archbishop seemed to shrink almost with a superstitious feeling from these words, while he tried in every possible way to elude the inquiries and entreaties of Bianca.

At last, all of a sudden, she raised her head momentarily, put aside the curtain, behind which he had gradually withdrawn himself during the latter part of the discourse, and, gazing fixedly on his countenance.

"A frightful thought breaks in on me!" she exclaimed; "What did Ubaldino mean by repeating, ironically, that she was drowned? The words then fell on my scared senses without meaning, but now they recur to me, and joined with your evasions—Oh! do not let me leave the world in a

delusion,—do not,” she repeated, with increasing hurrying energy, while, in endeavouring to raise herself still more, again the too vivid flush came over her face, forehead, and all—“do not let my last intercourse with (the world, with mankind, with the ministers of religion, be a deception practised on me! The deceived is nothing—a nullity—and the deceiver is a fiend that renders the work of God a nullity!—a thing that is not!—a lie!—a lie!—what is a lie?—it is making what is, not be—O God!—Nino—Archbishop—Ade-laida!” and the purple stream was again flowing!

In the intervals the Archbishop gave her the last sacraments, and the scene closed!

* * * *

In Bianca’s pocket was found a note which, at Alto Pascio, she had contrived to write to Niccolo Pisano. It contained merely these words—

“ DEAR FRIEND,

“ I claim your promise! and, if not displeasing to you, I should wish you to reverse, for my monument, the beautiful design you were working at, the last time I saw you. Let an

Angel present a lovely infant to my beloved brother, while he bears me away to heaven !

“ Adieu, Niccolo. Pray for me, and I will pray for you.

“ BIANCA.”

CHAPTER XII.

Two years have passed over since the death of the two beings who gleamed upon the world, as if to show, between them, specimens of moral and physical perfection.

The Count Ugolino is become a fierce tyrannical old man—preserving his vigour of mind and body as if by the force of volition—and, though now almost universally hated, is still at the head of the government—maintained there as much by the conscientious opposition of the Archbishop to his tyrannical measures, as by the secret aid of the King of Naples, and the interested motives of the Florentine merchants.

The Pisan Republic was still struggling on in protracted suffering, kept alive we may say by quack medicines, which, while affording a momentary relief, really undermined the constitution more and more. Such of the Genoese captives as were not dead continued to pine in

their prisons, and their friends to clamour for them in vain at home. A rich capture made at sea had given a moment's hope to the sick at heart, but it disappeared, no one knew how, except the few in the secret of the six thousand ducats. New taxes were levied, in order, as it was said, to pay the soldiers and sailors who were still kept in good order, though not in sufficient number to have done more than quell an internal insurrection ; but, instead of their salaries being paid, bonuses were given to purchase their patience, while the money raised was sent secretly through different ramifications to maintain Ugolino in his post at Pisa; to quell the insurrections of his dependences at Sardinia and elsewhere, and probably to purchase the forbearance of the neighbouring states ; for, in no other way can we account for not one of them having taken advantage of the miserable state of Pisa to give her the *coup-de-grace* ; at the same time that there is every reason to believe that Ugolino prevented any regular treaty of peace being concluded, at least with Genoa, in order to keep that republic as a sort of sword suspended over the heads of the Pisans threatening to fall on them if they did not

ward it off with money. On one occasion this *ruse* seems to have been so clumsily adopted that to us, who are now behind the scenes, it seems almost impossible that a fine and intelligent people could have been its dupe. The alarm was spread that the Genoese were preparing for a descent upon Porto Pisano, a proclamation was issued that ruin must be the consequence of any tardiness in furnishing the government with money to enable them to make the necessary resistance. The terrified people, from the very fact that it was impossible to raise enough to be of any use, contributed more than could have been expected; a few days after another proclamation declared, that the Genoese had already left their port, and as it was hopeless to think of being in time to meet them at sea, that Ugolino would go in person to Porto Pisano, man the towers, walls, and fortresses, and wait for the enemy there. All stood astonished; but there was no time for deliberation, or opposition, and the farce was enacted.

He went thither, caused the Florentine flag to be hoisted upon every pinnacle, and when the Genoese galleys arrived, they saluted it as that of

a friendly power ; took a few stones from the pier, and a piece of a broken chain, and retired, as if their only object had been to obtain that romantic souvenir ; while the duped Pisans flocked with pale faces, and attenuated forms, to kiss the hem of the garments of the victor !

Nino Visconti was at that time a man of high principles, humane feelings, and conscious of his own importance, but though no inducement had been able to prevail on him to resign the post of Podestà, thereby removing the only legal check to his grandfather's tyranny, still, such was the prestige clinging to the name and person of the old Capitano, and such would have been the pain, risk, and difficulty—under every aspect, of arraigning, in order to depose, one whose very hours must now be numbered, his grandson preferred absenting himself, as often as he could, from the scene where he felt his best powers wasted ; and, betaking himself to his paternal government in Sardinia — where he was at the point where we have taken up our story, Ubaldo recovered from the depression into which he had fallen after the frightful consequences of his unsteady principles.

His sufferings had been intense, but the same

facility of character which produced them, caused them to pass away ; the very complication of his misfortunes made them serve as a sort of counterbalance to each other. When he learned, too late, what an angel he had destroyed in Bianca, he detested himself, and felt he could never afterwards have been happy with her rival ; and when he thought upon the houri-like beauty of Genivra, he turned shudderingly away, and came in time to feel that, for whatever mysterious reason it might have been, his destiny was so indissolubly linked with both, he recovered the loss of both better than he should have done that of one. Nino, to whom his sister's dying request was sacred as an order from heaven, not only pardoned him as a Christian, but measuring his compassion rather by what he himself knew Ubaldino had lost, than by Ubaldino's own appreciation of it, took him back into his friendship, believing he was offering incense to Bianca's spirit in doing so ; and at the end of two years after her and Genivra's death, their lover was to all appearance as if no such events ever had occurred. What had been the Archbishop's feelings in the mean time ? However contradictory may be the opinions which party spirit passes on his character, his talents, I

believe, admit of no dispute. He was, accordingly, subject to a sudden and complete change of feeling or purpose, when once convinced there existed reason for either, no matter whence that reason came ; for he was far above the weakness of weighing any argument by the voice which uttered it, instead of by its own intrinsic merits. When he left Bianca's death-bed, he was an altered man—he felt he stood in a different position, not only to Ugolino but to the world. Ubaldino, his idol, had fallen, and had dragged him down with him ; but though mortified beyond all that weaker natures can conceive, he never uttered one word of reproach to the culprit ; but took him to his bosom with somewhat of that exquisitely merciful feeling which secures for the maimed or idiot child its mother's fondest care.

With what intensity of anxiety then he had waited for Ugolino's return from Naples, in order to learn how far Bianca's wishes and exhortations would be attended to, by the few in the fatal secret, can only be distantly guessed at ! A short time, however, served to convince him, that those few were faithful, and that Ugolino had not, and probably never would have any idea of the fact. As the near relative of the culprit,—and he per-

suaded himself, on public motives,—the Archbishop rejoiced in this ; but, at the same time, he felt that had the case been his own, instead of that of his beloved nephew, he would have flung the truth in the tyrant's teeth, and defied him ;—as it was, he bowed his haughty spirit to accept concealment, and concealment in which others shared, and the only consolation or counterpoise that haughty spirit could affect to find, was in conscientiously endeavouring to fulfil his promise to Bianca, and converting himself into the guardian angel of him he hated. The struggle was a terrible, an unnatural one for such a mind ; and yet it was such as no weaker mind, nor one composed of less jarring elements could have attempted. Ugolino became immediately aware of the change, and, not unnaturally, he exactly reversed the motive—his grand-daughter dead, Ubaldo released without his aid, nay, in opposition to his measures, and yet by means of money over which he had hitherto assumed control,—he supposed the Archbishop to have thrown aside all appearance of conciliation with him ; and, accordingly, he received all the counsels and suggestions which the latter ventured to offer him as attempted snares, and the opposition he made to his

tyrannical measures as so many intended insults. While a different temper in Ugolino might have seconded Bianca's Christian arguments with the Archbishop, and converted the gall into honey, this manner of receiving what he conscientiously offered for Ugolino's good, through the welfare of the country, by disuniting them more and more in spirit, and by keeping Ugolino in a perpetual state of ferment and irritation, afforded that gratification to the Archbishop's more evil feelings, which enabled him to continue his course longer than perhaps he could have done had he been obliged to assume, or had to meet in his great adversary, the appearance of a friendly spirit. But, although his influence and his opposition effected much, there was still much evil which he found it impossible to control.

Ugolino had, for some time past, thrown aside the last remnants of the party mask, and openly declaring himself a Guelph, the Ghibelines were banished, one after another, on the slightest pretext; tax was levied after tax, and the people at last fell into that worst of all states of moral degradation, namely, where each tries to gain a separate existence, not only at the expense of all public spirit, but even of the most sacred rights

of his neighbour—betrayed and trampled upon as these were by the tyrant. The Archbishop now began to think he was carrying his scrupulous fulfilment of his promise too far, and that the debt he smarted under at first, of Ubaldino's incurring towards the Count, had been more than paid by the two years he had, as he believed, sacrificed the people in order to spare his grey hairs from going dishonoured to the grave.

CHAPTER XIII.

MATTERS were just at this point when suddenly, without a hint being conveyed to the Archbishop — indeed, as it would appear, the project being purposely kept secret from him — a new tax was proclaimed, the news of which was received with a howl of horror and dismay. It was a tax on flour, almost the last article of consumption that remained within the people's reach. When the Archbishop heard of it he felt the hour of trial was come, and he feared for the result ; but he who fears seldom falls.

"He has borne with Ubaldino," he said to himself, while he ground his teeth and clenched his hands, almost at that moment regretting the moral obstacle that opposed itself to his taking vengeance on the tyrant,—"he has borne with Ubaldino, though never thoroughly forgiving him —it is true he did not know all ; but still—still—yes—and for her sake—that angel who prevented his knowing all ; it is hard—hard—but

still I will—I must—I will make one effort more, and then—then we are clear : for hard is that effort ; but I will make it—and I will make it all the more conscientiously from its difficulty.” And determining to go to him once more, without further delay, he sat down on the instant, and strung together on paper a few ideas, which he feared neither his own nor Ugolino’s forbearance would allow of his uttering connectedly, if trusting solely to *his* memory. He repaired to the house of Ugolino, requested an interview, was received, and, without uttering a word against the tax, or indeed entering upon that or any other subject, he said he came to ask a personal boon, which he explained to be, that Ugolino would permit him to read to the end without comment or interruption, the paper which he held in his hand.

Ugolino’s brow grew black as midnight, and, for a moment, he hesitated as to whether he should not allow the thunder to burst forth, and so break for ever with him whom he now considered the only thorn in his path. Habitual respect for his person and position, however, once more prevailed so far as to induce him to make a cold and constrained bow in sign of acquiescence ;

and the Archbishop, who was predetermined to endure unto the end, accepted it, and proceeded at once to read a sort of hasty recapitulation of the state of Pisa for the last few years, blaming Ugolino as lightly as it was possible, and attributing the debts and difficulties to internal misfortunes rather than to faults ; but, proceeding to say that, no matter what might have been the cause, the effect was such as now to require the most prompt, decisive, and vigorous treatment for the remedy, in order to avert inevitable ruin. Extraordinary circumstances, he said, required extraordinary measures ; and, as much good and much happiness were often lost for want of courage and confidence on the part of the governor and the governed, he besought Ugolino, as he valued his own and the public welfare, to take the only step now left to him, in order to recover it, namely, to throw himself into the arms of the people ; to make common cause with them ; to show himself their father, and take their opinion and advice.

He assured him it was quite impossible that such an appeal could be made in vain—that it was against the nature of things that it should be in vain ; for that it would be against the people's

own interest that it should be so. A whole people, upon finding their country in debt, even on the brink of ruin, cannot pack up their portmanteaus and migrate in a body to another country ; they cannot stay at home and starve. If they change their government, it can never be done without increasing the debt, and then the old and new must still be paid. What then is the alternative ? To look over the accounts calmly, dispassionately, and without prejudice together, as would be done by the members of one family, the partners in a mercantile concern, or in any other case where all are concerned in the expenditure and income ; for in this respect, none are more linked together than the Governor who spends, under whatever name, and the people who pay ; if there then appear undue or unprofitable expenditure let it be retrenched—retrenched at once. Let the spender submit to the retrenchment as he would to the lopping off a diseased limb, which, remaining, would cost his life. The people will then aid him in the hour of trial with sympathy, and such remedies or substitutes as it may be in their power to bestow ; they will sacrifice not only their superfluities and luxuries, but a portion of their so-called necessities to do

so ; for, the monster does not exist, in our days, who would voluntarily, or even heedlessly fall a second time into the necessity of demanding such sacrifices. On the other hand, if the expenditure has been just, there *must* be means in the state to bear it — the one is a corollary of the other. Let those means then be sought out with heart, and head, and hand, by each, as he would avoid private bankruptcy, dishonour, and starvation— and they will do so, the people will do so, if the governor show confidence in them ; but it is not just to expect them to remain for ever submissively ignorant of their own affairs, while they see them, to all appearance, going to ruin and destruction. You listen to me, Count Ugolino— may I—may I hope that I have made some impression ? — that you will reconsider this tax before passing it into a law ? ”

“ Monsignore, I have considered it.”

“ But all I have now urged—”

“ Is very eloquent, but not applicable.”

The Archbishop arose, and took his leave to avoid temptation. The tax passed into a law, and the people began to die of hunger.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE Archbishop went to Ugolino no more after the last repulse, but he shut himself into his palace that he might not hear the groans he could not relieve, and clutched his hands together in the hope of controlling his boiling passions until he should be able, on Nino Visconti's return, to concert some means of relieving the people, without, if possible, cutting off their old governor in the midst of his iniquity. He was in that very attitude, and oppressed by those very thoughts, one day, with the breviary open on a small table before him, and endeavouring to fix his eyes, as it were, by force upon it, when he heard a tremulous and nervous attempt at opening the door of the closet where he sat ; then a tap, which ought to have preceded the attempt ; and again, instead of answering to the question, "Who is there ?" a renewal of the nervous fluttering and fumbling at the door. At length, on the question being

peremptorily and impatiently repeated, the door opened, and the head chaplain presented himself as pale as death, and trembling, evidently in the most fearful agitation. The Archbishop, having raised his eyes, cast them again instantly upon his breviary, supposing the priest was come to record some new scene of suffering consequent upon the new flour-tax.

“I am occupied,” he said, slightly waving his hand, to intimate that he would not be disturbed, for he had been wrestling hard with himself and felt he could at that moment bear no more.

“B—bu—but, Monsignore.”

“Sir, I have said I am occupied!” and his eyes were now again raised, but this time, in order to awe the intruder into immediate obedience. The priest, however, instead of withdrawing, fell upon his knees, and clasping his hands together, looked up to the Archbishop with such an expression as could not be the effect of any of the scenes that were already become only too common. The Archbishop then jumped to another conclusion.

“What has happened? What have you done? Speak, speak at once; you know I can bear or pardon anything except suspense.”

“ Alas ! Monsignore—”

“ Speak, sir ! and do not trifle with me. I offer you my pardon beforehand—there—go ! you are not capable of offending me in any sense of the word—but go !”

“ Monsignore—I have done nothing—but—Ugolino—”

“ Silence, sir !—do not dare to speak to me of that man !”

“ But — Monsignore — your nephew — Ubaldino.”

“ Has sent you to me—no matter—even to him I *cannot* listen on this subject—go and say to him—” but the man put up a hand in so deprecatory a manner, that it seemed authoritative, while he bent down his head, till it rested on his heart.

“ What does this mean, priest ? ” asked the Archbishop in a calmer tone, his great energies immediately rising at the possibility of there being any call upon them. The priest looked furtively up as he still knelt at his feet, with his hand still raised above his bent head, in the attitude of deprecation.

“ Monsignore, have you guessed — have you some idea ? ” he whispered hoarsely.

"Saints of heaven!—yes, sir!—no, sir—will you drive me mad?"

"Ubaldino—"

"Well, sir—Ubaldino?—nay, this is too much—I will see him myself—Is he in the house? Do you hear me, sir?—Is my nephew in the house?"

"He—he—is, Monsignore. Alas! alas!"

The Archbishop now rose without another word; and, violently and angrily shaking off the arms of the priest, who would have held him, he was escaping to the door, when the priest at last gasped out, but in accents only too intelligible—

"Monsignore, be a man! Ubaldino—is—is dead!"

The Archbishop's heart closed, and refused to take in the words.

"How?" he asked, in a tone of calm interrogation and turning slowly round from the door.

"He is dead, Monsignore, and by the hand of Ugolino!" And it was true; almost impossible as such an act of violence would be in our days.

In the absence of Visconti the people had gathered round the young and lovely daughter of

Caproni, who had just married that grandson of Ugolino, of whom we thus read in Danté's "Inferno"—

. . . . ed Anselmuccio mio
Disse, &c. *

and besought her to ask for the repeal of the tax as her wedding-boon. She, good and beautiful, but timid, could much more readily have made up her mind to die herself than ask the life of others from the tyrant; and, accordingly, she implored of her bridegroom to take the task upon himself.

He consented, only providing, rather in gaiety and a wish for companionship, than from any feeling of apprehension, that Ubaldino, who happened to be paying a morning visit at his house, at the moment, should accompany him.

"Oh! yes, yes," exclaimed the young bride, "the Archbishop's nephew will be an excellent second!"

Ubaldino hesitated for a moment, but the lady rallied him on attempting to dispute her commands, and he went.

When they were admitted to the presence of

* See the part quoted at the commencement of this story.

Ugolino, Anselmo at once made known the object of his visit. Ugolino, already irritated by the numerous applications made to him on the subject from quarters where he could not show his resentment, seized upon this opportunity to give vent to it, by asking furiously, on what grounds his grandson dared to interfere with his measures.

The young bridegroom answered with more spirit in that character, than, perhaps, he might otherwise have had nerve to do, "On the grounds of public justice," and the infuriated old man instantly drew his sword, and, lunging at him, wounded him in the arm.

Ubaldino could bear no more; but rushing to defend his friend, and wresting the sword from the old man's hand, and flinging it to the far end of the large apartment, asked him, "what hope remained for others under a tyrant capable of embruing his hands in his own blood?"

The words were scarcely uttered when, as if blinded by rage, Ugolino staggered towards a wall, against which rested a heavy instrument composed of wood and iron, used for chopping fire-wood, and, seizing upon it, struck Ubaldino a blow which extended him a corpse at his feet.

Such was the tale which, in broken and disjointed sentences, the Archbishop now elicited from his terrified chaplain. During its progress, when the truth began really to dawn upon him, he felt a convulsive trembling taking possession of his frame. It began with the hand which happened to be resting on the table beside him. When he became aware of it, from the shaking of the table, he removed his hand, and placed it on his knee ; but, as if from the sympathy of contact, his knee, his foot, the other foot and knee began also ; and, finally, though he tried to steady himself by grasping each knee in his hands, the whole room shook beneath the force of the convulsion, and the priest arrested his narration in terror.

The Archbishop waited one second, and then roared, rather than said—

“ Go on, sir ! go on without one moment’s delay ! ”

The poor man tried to obey ; but, as the convulsion progressed until the chattering of the strong and perfect teeth might be heard in the next room, he started up, and saying—

“ Oh, Monsignore ! I *must* call for help,” would have fled, but the Archbishop seizing him

as he passed in a gripe like that of a vice, shook him, though without that design, down upon his knees again ; and, as he supported his own convulsed frame against him, with great difficulty he articulated—

“Would you — would you dare — to — to — expose me *thus?* Go on !”

The priest now, for the first time burst into tears, and the Archbishop, looking on him with a smile between contempt and compassion, said, “Poor fool !” and, after another momentary pause, commanded him again to go on.

But the tale was nearly told ; and when it was quite so, the Archbishop, without uttering a single word, leaned back in his chair, covering his eyes with one hand, while, with the other, he still supported himself upon the chaplain’s shoulder.

Five minutes might have passed thus, during which the priest prayed, as fervently, perhaps, as ever he had done in his life, that some blessed chance might send other persons to his aid ; but, unfortunately for him, all were occupied in another part of the vast mansion, round the corpse of Ubaldino.

By degrees, however, the convulsion began

somewhat to subside, and, in a few minutes, the Archbishop, slowly removing his hand from his face, exclaimed in a tone of bitter and ungracious triumph, as if over some unseen foe who had sought to crush him beneath his sorrow—

“Hah! for this time, at least, we have conquered!” and he drew a profound sigh, as if shaking a load off his spirits. “Now, hear me, priest; and mark me! I was prophetic, you see, in offering you my forgiveness. I said you could not offend me. I thought so, because certain rep—. No matter; poor man! Listen to me. I find there is a way by which you could offend me — offend me mortally. I am speaking coherently; am I not?” he said again, pressing his hand upon his eyes for a moment, as if to recollect his energies. “Yes, yes, Ruggieri—I am—I will be Ruggieri degli Ubaldini. Although there be one less now to do honour to the name—no matter—it is the more necessary that I act for both. Listen, then, priest, and mark me. I forgive you, because I promised you beforehand that I would. I forgive you the imposition you have endeavoured to practise upon me, as to the cause of my nephew’s death. Silence, sir! Repeat the calumny against the

Count Ugolino della Gherardesca, the Governor of the Republic, the Father of his People, and my fast friend—and take the full force of my vengeance ! Silence, I say again, sir ! and do not examine my features as if you thought me mad. I am not mad, most noble Festus ! But what can be your aim in trying to put two Christians against each other to the death ? Is *that* the part of a Christian ? Faugh ! priest, you ought to be ashamed of yourself ; first, for falling into so pitiful a snare ; believing such an idle rumour ; and then for repeating it to *me* ! almost if it were true — if it *could* have been true—you ought not to have done so. However, no matter, you see you have done no harm. Be thankful for your escape. But, as your intention was evil, I impose on you to contradict this calumny everywhere,—Do you mark me ?—and say that I am better informed as to the cause of my nephew's death. I warrant me there are no signs — eh ? He did not — I mean the blow — the fall—he—hem !—did not—well, no matter. I see you have the heart of a chicken ; and if he be disfigured,” suddenly shouting the last words, as if in fierce and angry triumph over his own repugnance to utter them ; “*If he be*

disfigured, I repeat — Where ? — In the head ? It is well ? Struck him on the temple — eh ? — “ ghu ! ghu ! ” screaming hoarsely, and grinding his teeth so fiercely that the chaplain feared a return of the convulsion. “ Well ! and why, in falling down stairs, might he not fall on his head ? What more natural ? Blows do not come on the temple *accidentally* — exactly on the very spot to cause death, and to tell *me* the Count Ugolino — the good, the benevolent — chut ! chut ! we are wasting time. What was I saying ? If he be disfigured, it will make no difference where he is gone. The worms — the *worms* — the *worms*,” shouting louder at each repetition of the word, “ to whom his highness has made him a present, in his blooming youth, — to save his own dainty old carcass — with his beautiful face so like — his mother’s ! Yes ! Why should I not own he had a mother ? Why do you steal up that thief’s look at me ? ’S death, sir ! is any one born without a mother ? The father — the father is the point, and God knows he was my brother’s son ! But I think I am talking a little oddly ; am I, priest ? — tell me the truth,” — and once more he leaned back, and shutting his eyes, remained silent for a few minutes, while the poor

chaplain, still on his knees, in the sympathy and feeling of equality which the sight of suffering, as the badge of our common nature, creates, leaned his head upon the knees of the Archbishop, and wept bitterly.

Again the Archbishop recovered himself. “Listen, chaplain,” he repeated. “Never repeat your fault—nay, do what you can to repair it, and say to all—Do you understand me?—to *all* that I hold, the man means to insult me who dares repeat this idle tale to me. You, priest, have seen my weakness; but that, I think, may be forgiven beneath the shock. I shall now withdraw into the country—immediately—instantly. I shall remain there for a few days, and shall then return: you will go and give my compliments to Ugolino, and bid him not over-fatigue himself, but preserve his precious health, that I may find him well on my return. You see I do not intend to take you with me, because you have a task to perform for me here. I do not like to put my nephew into the ground. It is a weakness;—but a man can only have a certain portion of strength, and I want mine for another purpose,—and it *might* fail me; I *might* waste it in attempting too much. So you will do *all that for me!* Do

you understand me ? But," he cried, suddenly changing his voice, and again grasping the chaplain's arm and wheeling him round, so as to look into his face, while his own was working with a wild gleam, not of hope, but of something that would grasp at aught, " you are *certain* that he is dead ? It is well—no more ! See all done then, and the house prepared for my return in a week, as if nothing had ever happened ; and no one will ever be so cruel as to remind me that I had a nephew. Now go and give orders for my departure—instantly—*instantly !*" But the chaplain had not crossed the ante-chamber when he was again recalled ; he found not only the manner, but the countenance and colour of the Archbishop already changed, and somewhat returned to what was more habitual with him.

" Excuse me, chaplain," he said, in a voice little different from usual ; " I forgot that it will be necessary for me to see the Prior of St. Dominic's before I go. While they are preparing for my departure pray send some one to him with my compliments to request that he will come to me forthwith."

The order was instantly obeyed, and when the Prior came, in tremendous agitation, to receive

as he supposed the overwhelming outbreak of the Archbishop's wrath and grief, he grew pale and cold with fright at the calm, composed state in which he found him. As soon as they were seated Ruggieri told him that he had sent for him in consequence of hearing of the rumours, scarcely more scandalous than absurd, that were afloat respecting the cause of the death of his nephew ; and, because there was no knowing to what pass human wickedness or weakness might be carried, he thought it advisable to request of him, the Prior, to wait on his friend, the Count Ugolino, in his name, in order to request of him not to allow such rumours to cause him one moment's uneasiness, by supposing it possible that he, the Archbishop, could give the very slightest weight to them. He knew how his nephew had met his death, and he bowed to the decree of Heaven. All he requested was, that after the week of solitude at his villa at Calci, which human weakness required, nothing should ever be said, calculated to remind him that he had had a nephew. He had loved him he saw too much, and he recognised the hand of God in the punishment, and bowed himself to it."

He would now turn his whole soul to the good of the Republic, which he had too long sacrificed to private feelings ; and almost without allowing the prior to open his lips, he waved him courteously away ; and the latter found himself in the street, and on his way to Ugolino, scarcely knowing how, and certainly more bewildered than he had ever been in his life before.

CHAPTER XV.

FEW tasks could, perhaps, have been more distasteful to the Prior of St. Dominick's, than that which now devolved upon him. It is true, in ordinary cases, it would be rather acceptable than otherwise to one who had just committed a murder, to hear that the person alone interested in convicting him was determined, against all evidence, to believe him innocent ; but, besides, that Ugolino could not be calculated upon, by general rules, the prior knew that, since he had insisted upon the payment of the six thousand ducats, Ugolino had but sought an excuse for visiting him with his vengeance, by some means which should not involve the disclosure of the secret that existed between them, and the late outrage against Ubaldino, showed that he would not be particularly scrupulous as to what such means might be. The prior had already had another proof of this which came

more immediately home to him, and, which, though exercised upon another, he had considered as a sort of precautionary hint to himself, and he had, accordingly, acted upon it. It occurred the very day before poor Ubaldino's death. Fra Bonafazio, who had continued Ugolino's agent, when necessary, had latterly assumed somewhat more courage in his presence, from the very fact of seeing the humiliating extremes to which his temper, daily becoming more ungovernable, often carried him, and having been implored by a highly respectable family, reduced to the lowest misery by partial exactions—(for, in the frightful state of public exigencies, where many resisted, the more submissive were not unfrequently forced to make good the deficit)—to represent their state to the tyrant, and beg for some redress; and having been recommended strongly, even by the prior himself, to make the attempt, he plucked up spirit, and began one day upon the subject; but no sooner had he, encouraged by the Count's silence, attempted to hint at the severity of the flour-tax, than the Count starting up, and seizing him by the throat, exclaimed, “And you, also! even you, vile ass! but if you ever dare to bray

to me again upon any subject, not of my dictation, I shall remove, at least, *your* interest in the flour-tax!" and he flung him outside the door! No human being heard the burly friar descend the stairs that day, although he had ascended with wooden sandles which clattered, when he pleased, with authoritative loudness.

Nor was he recognised by friend or acquaintance in returning through the streets. Certain it is, however, that at last he found himself in his convent, and in the prior's room, and then opening his lips for the first time, he said,—

"Signore Priore, what is the most precious thing in this world?"

The prior considered only for a minute ere he answered, "Life, life, to be sure. What would all else be without it?"

"Then it is better to have a throat with no flour to put into it than to have flour and no throat to put it into."

"Buffoon! what freak are you at now?"

"Freak! I think freaks and I have shaken hands and parted for one while. Do you hear nothing odd in my voice?"

"I hear you cough occasionally, nothing more."

"Look here, then," and the marks of Ugolino's fingers were already visible. "Now, then, hear me, sir Prior. I am very ill—you understand me? —and you will please to choose another agent, or messenger, or confidant, or whatever you may please to call it; for out of this house I stir no more until a certain madman is in irons, and, if you take my advice, you will keep me company;—excuse the liberty of my speech."

This announcement, followed as it was the next day by Ubaldino's death, did not, as we may suppose, render the prior very anxious to present himself before Ugolino; but, besides that few things would have required more courage than to disobey a direct order from the Archbishop, the nature of the message to Ugolino rendered obedience as little alarming as might be.

It has been truly said that when the Almighty is tired of calling a man vainly to repentance, ere abandoning him to his self-entailed fall, he weakens his intellect, and certainly the Count Ugolino offers no exception to this rule. For, to what but the weakness, or blindness of self-delusion can be attributed the credulity which led a man of his mental faculties, and especially that faculty of knowing the characters of

others, to suppose that the Archbishop could be deceived upon such a subject ?

The conception of such a scheme, when proved successful, speaks as much in favour of the daring ingenuity of the concoctor, as for the weakness of him who fell into the snare.

The Count Ugolino felt an immense weight lifted off him by the prior's visit ; nay, in the Archbishop's mention of his having been punished for neglecting the affairs of the Republic, coupled as that was with the civil messages to himself, he read a change of principles, and founded on it a hope that on his return, instead of thwarting him in his financial schemes, he would second him, and then he felt sure that all would at last go well.

For some time it appeared as if he had calculated justly. When the Archbishop returned from the country, to all appearance as if nothing had ever disturbed him, he did not, indeed, seek a private interview with Ugolino, as he had often conscientiously done for the last two years ; on the contrary, it might have been observed that, without ever transgressing good-breeding, he so managed as never to find himself alone with him ; but, on the other hand, he no longer offered any

opposition, or any remonstrance, direct or indirect, to whatever he was pleased to say or do in public or in private ; and it even appeared as if he approved of every thing—only contenting himself with affording such relief to the sufferers from the flour-tax as his private means admitted of—a species of opposition which did not at all displease the Count, as it enabled some few, at least, to linger on a little longer without leaving him a legacy of curses which was paid more heartily by the surviving relatives than legacies generally are, and, to all appearance, the rival-minds became better friends than they had ever been.

In the meantime Nino Visconti returned, and found Ubaldino murdered by his grandfather, and his fellow-citizens in this fearful state ; his loyal heart bounded with indignation, and he set himself without further management or consideration to oppose the tyrant by every means in his power. He first addressed himself to the Archbishop ; but he found him, as he believed, strangely changed by grief for his nephew. He attempted to touch upon that subject, but the Archbishop stopped him peremptorily ; and though expressing his regret at the sufferings of the people, as he seemed not to hope or believe

there was any remedy for them, Nino determined to act upon his own responsibility and alone. The consequences soon became sufficiently evident ; but they were not those to be most desired. It seems strange to speak of a tyrant like Ugolino possessing still a party ; but if we are to say the king can never die, we may say a public political character can never live without a party. No tyrant, however rapacious, could spend on himself alone *all* that could be extracted from a people ; and he must pay for protectors ; unfortunately such are always to be bought, and are generally sufficient, with the prestige that ever does—ever will—and ever should exist in favour of *the head*, to constitute a party, at least for a time ; and to the humiliation of our degraded nature, we must add that sometimes, as extremes meet, the greater the tyranny, the more adhesive is his party, from two causes—the necessity *he* feels of securing them, and the terror *they* feel of falling to the tender mercies of those they have helped to oppress, until, at last, from mere, good, easy men, whose greatest crime was want of energy for others, they become each a separate, individual, unprincipled tyrant, from the ne-

cessity, as they believe, of self-defence ; and the mass is crushed down, until some desperate victim rushing wildly forth, sword in hand, calls on all to assist him in becoming worse than their oppressors by carrying still farther the hellish principle that might makes right, as if brute force could ever permanently remedy moral wrong. Such a party, then, Ugolino had, and between the off-sets of it, and those of Nino Visconti, broils, skirmishes and bloody frays began to disturb the streets by day and by night ; nor were they long confined to the streets, the rumours soon spread into the country, to the neighbouring castles, and in a few short weeks the whole face of the republic was changed into a scene of civil war, no longer between the two great rival parties, but, as might be said, between two members of a family. It is impossible to give an idea of Count Ugolino's state of mind at this time. He had still judgment enough left to know and see that if the party of Nino Visconti was not already the most influential, as it certainly was the most numerous, it only waited for him to be removed by death, and the government to pass into the hands of any one of his fiery and inexperienced

sons to be wrested at once, and for ever, from their grasp ; and perhaps, nay probably, he thought—for he had by this time fallen into the common weakness of unenlarged or inexperienced or decaying minds, that of judging others by himself—to be followed by the destruction of his whole family.

In this emergency he had again recourse to the Archbishop, and to the old scheme of his using his influence with Nino Visconti to induce him to resign the post of Podestà, and restore peace to his country. The Prior of St. Dominick's, sorely against his will, was the person forced into this negotiation. The Archbishop smiled when the request was made to him, and promised to make the attempt once more, though, as he said, little hopeful of success, because he knew Visconti, though void of personal ambition, believed it his duty to act as a sort of counterpoise to his grandfather. When the prior returned a few days after for the answer, it was nearly such as the Archbishop had predicted. There was, however, one trifling difference which the Archbishop let fall, seemingly merely for the purpose of laughing at its absurdity, which was, that Nino was really so entirely single-minded in all this that he would

be willing as a proof of his sincerity to resign his place of Podestà on condition that his grandfather would resign his of Captain of the People.

"Oh ! but that of course he would rather die than do !" exclaimed the prior, " if all the world were to die with him."

" Of course," repeated the Archbishop, " nothing could be more absurd, unless, indeed, it were—but it is idle wasting words on such flights of fancy—Good morning,—you will then express my regret at this second failure."

" But may we not have the benefit of what Monsignore was about to suggest—even for myself ?" and of this there was no mistaking the sincerity ; " I should be so thankful to be able to take back any suggestion, instead of a blank refusal."

" But, my good prior," and this from the Archbishop was a great condescension ; " what I was going to say was nearly as absurd as the other. In fact, I cannot say it even came into my head, but was just one of those associations of words, as it were, which come forth after others—nay, it is not worth making a mystery about. I believe what I was about to say was, that of course Count Ugolino would not resign his post unless

it were for a moment, in order to induce Visconti to resign his."

"Hah!" exclaimed the prior, evidently struck with the idea; "but then, Monsignore, he has already been deceived by his grandson having refused to resign the place he held as deputy. He talks of it eternally, and of his own folly in trusting to any one."

The Archbishop smiled a smile of condescension, as it were, at absurdity not worthy of an answer, and made it manifest that he wished to terminate the discussion.

The prior accordingly withdrew; but the next day he again entreated for an audience, and was refused; he came the day after, and was admitted, and it was to ask,—after much circumlocution, and what he believed, or the Count believed, or perhaps both believed to be great management and sounding of the Archbishop—whether, if Ugolino should consent to resign his place for a few days, in order to induce Nino to resign his permanently, the Archbishop would himself accept the place of Capitano del Popolo for that time, there being no one else upon whose honour and circumstances together, Ugolino could or would rely for restoring it to him without difficulty,

compensation, or delay. At this proposal the Archbishop affected the most profound astonishment.

"Why," he exclaimed, "is our friend gone mad?" It was the first time he had said "our friend." "Does he forget that though such a step is not prohibited by the laws, probably from the improbability of such prohibition being necessary, it would be highly unbecoming—indecorous—"

"Perhaps, were it to be permanent, Monsignore ; but for a few days, and for such a purpose—"

"Oh, of course, if it were not for that it would be little less than an insult ; and, even as it is—" and, in short, not until the prior had said, and urged enough to convince himself and Ugolino, that nothing had been farther from the Archbishop's thoughts, did the latter consent to reflect upon the strange proposal ; and, having spoken again with Visconti, to give an answer in three days—three being the number, then as now, resorted to in all matters of indifference—and the prior withdrew to boast to the Count of his own extraordinary powers for diplomacy.

At the time specified the prior returned, and the Archbishop informed him that Nino Visconti had conceived some suspicion, from the fact of

his being named as the Capitano ; that to confess the truth this was hardly to be wondered at ; it scarcely could be otherwise, and that he had, accordingly, clogged his own resignation with new conditions ; namely, that the Archbishop should be the one also to hold the post of Podestà, until that of Capitano del Popolo should be finally given away, in order that the two resignees should stand on equal terms, and, moreover, that both should immediately withdraw themselves from Pisa, as the only step likely to give effect to the resignation.

When these conditions were repeated to Ugolino, his answer was that to the first he was indifferent, that the second he rejoiced at ; but that he should add a third, namely, that he might take a thousand armed men of his party with him, commanded by his faithful sub-captain, Fieri di Bientina, and that he should only retire as far as his villa at Settimo, seven miles distant from Pisa.

Here again did the Count betray that he was no longer a match for his rival-intellect. It was impossible he could have made to the Archbishop a more gratifying or desirable proposal than that which he intended should be the test of his sin-

cerity ; namely, the permitting him to withdraw a thousand of the most factious of his followers from Pisa ; for, what one called faithful, the other called factious ; and it would be an inspired dictionary that could decide which was the more correct.

So delighted, indeed, was the Archbishop, that he gaily exclaimed :

“ Oh, yes, my first act, as Capitano del Popolo is to give him this permission ; ” adding, with more gravity, “ He is right, he is right — not that I myself have the least suspicion of Nino Visconti ! ”

In a few days, then, all was arranged accordingly. The entire powers of the government were vested in the Archbishop. Ugolino withdrew to Settimo, Visconti to Calci ; and the people again looked on to see in what they were to be called upon to sympathise—tragedy, comedy, or melodrama—as if they had no more authority, and far less power, to act or counteract whatever it might be, than has the audience at a theatre.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE grandfather and grandson were no sooner out of the town than the Archbishop called a meeting of the senate for the following morning ; and in their presence he laid aside at once, and, as it seemed, for ever, every character, every idea, every feeling, except those of the competent, enlightened statesman, who had seized the helm of government in the hour of peril, in order to work the good ship off the rocks on which she had been cast. Making the paper he had drawn up some days before for Ugolino his basis, he enlarged upon and improved all he had there said, taking a luminous retrospective glance of what had once been the position of the Republic, and what it now was ; avoiding, as he had done with Ugolino, all proper names, and the word “fault” whilst he dwelt on the causes which led to her present miseries and degradation with a perspicuity and decision which induced every

one else to call them “crimes.” Finally, he came to the remedies for the future ; and there he confessed he found great difficulty ; “but,” he said, “is it the part of a man to shrink from difficulty ? No ! my friends ! it is the difficulty which has tempted me to take this otherwise unbecoming part in public affairs. Everything may be remedied by the will of man except death—that, then, it is evident, is the first thing to prevent, as far as may be possible. For this reason I propose, at once, and without looking to the after consequences, the abolition of the flour-tax. I know how empty are the public coffers, but, to use a homely phrase, empty coffers are more endurable than empty stomachs. I know that the state is in debt, and the salaries of her working officers in arrears—but, are these deficiencies to be made up by depriving our fellow-citizens of the necessities of life ?”

“I am not—and you all know it well—a leveller, or one who would rob the rich to enrich the poor ; but neither will I rob the poor man of his life, lest the comparatively rich man be forced to make some retrenchment. I am no leveller, and I scoff at the word equality, for, far easier would it be to level the surface of the

earth than to level the distinctions that nature has placed between man and man ; but these distinctions are not in every point ; every human being has some portions of our nature in common, and these, I say *these*, as far as they go, are to be, I would say *ought* to be, equally respected in all. One of these is the necessity of food to support life ; and if the extreme case, by some almost impossible event should occur, of choosing between saving the life of a rich or a poor man, we should not allow that circumstance, in itself, to weigh one particle in our decision. How then can we presume to advance, as an argument for the starvation of the mass, the necessity for paying the salaries of the few ? Nay, hear me a few moments longer, my friends. I am not proposing or suggesting an unsound or dangerous principle, as you say ; what is due I would pay as far as it be possible, but surely not by the bread of others. It has long been, and will yet long be, one of the most difficult problems of government, how to raise money for the maintenance of the state,—and why ? Because to the uneducated eye, one portion —a small proportion of the population receives what the others pay. It is true, but *what* do they receive ? they receive *gold*—a metal that

cannot stand them instead of either food, or drink, or sleep, or health, or life. It is true it may procure them all these ; but if these are procured for the others in their necessary quantities, without the individual seeing, or receiving into his hand that gold ? If those necessaries are procured for the non-receiver by the labour the most wearing of all—the mental labour of the receiver—the financier, or governor, or minister, however he may be denominated—in what are the others the sufferers ? But mind, I say, while these necessities are secured to them. But they see the rich man's sumptuous table, his fine garments, his horses, his dogs, his hawks, and they ask why are they debarred from such enjoyments ? They are not debarred from them ; let them win them and wear them ; let them work for, and gain them. But they say there are many who enjoy them in what is called the right of inheritance, who have never worked an hour for them. Well, and those who would seize them, have *they* worked an hour for them ? They have worked, of course, and toiled in the sweat of their brow for lower and poorer recompense. Well, and they have had that recompense, such as the world has hitherto agreed to adjudge it. If that be too small, and

in many cases I believe it is, let them bring forward their reasons why their own labours should be better paid ; let them show—for every man is capable of showing whatever he clearly comprehends—and with what he cannot clearly comprehend he should not meddle,—let them show that they produce more good to the state than the value of the recompense, and selfish interest will soon do them justice—but not by paying one man for what another gains. The uneducated man cannot do the work of the educated man ; candour and truth forbid me adopting the false and vulgar mode of endeavouring to satisfy the minds of the poor and uneducated by assuring them that they are happier than the rich and educated. I believe it is directly the reverse ; but my simple answer to the question, why it should be so, is this—Ask it of God !

“ Until all minds, all talents, nay, all physical faculties are alike, some will gain more than others—immeasurably more than others—and in the end it would make little difference whether such gains descend by inheritance or not ; for immediately the sons of working fathers know that they must work or lose the fruits of their fathers’ labours, they would work also, and still

according to their abilities ; and the only difference to the poor would be that by the industry of many members of a family, instead of one, that family would accumulate still more and more money within itself ; while the members wanting in talent would gradually sink into a poorer class, and perhaps the members of some poorer family take their place in the higher grade. But what then ? Does it not all end as it began, in there being distinctions placed by God in the power of gain, and that in those distinctions consists the whole secret of the different classes and ranks and enjoyments of society ? But this law of God, like every other of his laws, has been left, for some hidden but indubitably wise reason, subject to man's abuse. The poor and the rich have alike abused it ; and we are, at this moment, suffering the effects of this abuse ; and such abuses, if we do not remove them ourselves, will be more roughly and yet less effectually removed by others. To the task, then, my friends, with a will ! You have no longer a governor—a head ; I am here, as your friend—your companion—I had almost said, in arms," and the Archbishop's countenance and gesture corresponded to his words, and astonished all who looked upon him.

“Yes! and why not, should it be necessary? Would it be the first time that a priest has put on armour? But let us first try the words of peace,” he said, rather as if recollecting what was becoming, than as if expressing what he felt. “I have said you have no general head; you must, therefore, each make use of his own; you must each of you bring to the common cause all he can of suggestions, councils, advice, founded upon the past, weighed by the present, and calculated for the future. In the meantime, the flour-tax is abolished. The people require, deserve it; and let each of us who may suffer by the abolition, do so willingly;” and he was about to break up the sitting, and had actually risen to his feet, when, casting his eye upon a small slip of paper which he held in his hand, it appeared suddenly to remind him of something, which, till then, had escaped his memory, and, begging pardon of the senators, he asked their patience for one moment longer, and, without even resuming his seat, he made the first direct allusion to the disunion between Ugolino and his grandson, and made that the ground for first throwing out a hint, then suggesting, and finally advising in the most bland, gracious, and confiding manner, that

as there remained in Pisa so very few Ghibelines, in order to preserve the appearance of impartiality, and to secure the tranquillity which must be the desire of every Christian and patriotic heart, a few of the principal Guelphic leaders should also withdraw for a short time, and betake themselves to their respective castles ; and such was the manner of the proposal, and altogether so taken by surprise were the minds of men at seeing what the Archbishop had already, in a few days, accomplished, that they believed his power, for the moment, almost supernatural, and there was an unanimous consent expressed ; and almost all the leading Guelphs prepared in sincerity to fulfil it.

In the meantime, the news of the abolition of the flour-tax was spread amongst the people, and the return of the Archbishop from the senate-house to his palace was that of the most triumphant procession. Shouts, prayers, blessings, resounded upon all sides ; crowds pressed on crowds to touch his garments ; and some even threw themselves before him in the attempt to kiss his feet. He received these demonstrations as if with the quiet dignity of a man only conscious of having done his duty ; but when the

people, still exciting themselves and others more and more, proceeded to make allusions to his Christian forbearance on the subject of his nephew's death, a close observer might have seen that, while the pale cheek flushed a little, a cold, bitter, and somewhat contemptuous smile betrayed that all was not within as peaceful as it seemed.

In the mean time the news of the resignation of Ugolino, followed by what was, perhaps, not inaptly termed the banishment of the Guelphs, began to get wind ; and Sattarello, although no longer officially exercising the profession of spy, made an *ex-officio* visit to the poor old Admiral Lancia, in order to communicate what he knew would go nearer than anything else upon earth to bring consolation to his heart. He was not mistaken.

“Take me to Pisa ! take me to Pisa directly, Sattarello !” he exclaimed ; “I never thought to go out of these grounds again — but to see Pisa without him will counterbalance all else.”

Sattarello endeavoured with all his might to dissuade him. At last, finding all else in vain—

“You know, master — that is, you forget—” and the faithful creature paused.

"That I shall have to cross *the river*, Sattarello ? Heigh ho ! Yes, for the moment I did forget it. But what then ? It will not make much difference, I think. She is always in my mind, so it cannot make much difference ; only come with me, Sattarello, and, in the mean time, take this as a reward for the news you have brought me."

But Sattarello started back, unfeignedly—

"I dare not—I dare not, my master ! Adelaida would never forgive me. She would say that made all the difference between a spy and a friend — if you can forgive the word ; and, though an angel from heaven, she is very spiteful, in her own way, when vexed."

"Is that being an angel ?"

"Yes, because she says she is never vexed without reason."

"And why do you give her reason to be vexed ?"

"Why, it does not seem to me, at the time, that she has reason ; but she always contrives to make me own it before she forgives me."

"Ho, ho ! poor Sattarello ! is that the way with you ?"

"No, my lord, it is not, and I am not poor

Sattarello. I repeat she really is an angel ; and I won't take the money, for I don't care to vex her, especially just now."

"And why just now ? Oh, I see. Well, I'll tell you what you'll do, Sattarello. Take this purse instead of the trifle I first offered you, to buy a christening-dress — *that*, I am sure, Adelaida will not feel herself free to refuse."

"Why, putting it in that way — but still I am not sure. I will tell you what I'll do, if you allow me. I'll take the purse, and I'll return it if she won't let me keep it."

"But you are much older than she is, Sattarello ; why do you let her rule you ?"

"For that very reason, I believe. Oh, if she was as old as myself, I should soon be able to manage her !"

"Well, well, go your own way, as you seem satisfied. Take the purse ; but you understand you come with me to Pisa ?"

"Yes, yes ; but," turning back, "it is not for that either that I take it. I myself would think that as ungrateful as she would think the other dirty !"

"Well, well ; take it any way you like."

"I take it, then, as a free gift to the child,

and many thanks ; and I go to Pisa with you with all my heart, my dear master, as a free compliment."

Next day they were on their way betimes, and Sattarello in particularly good spirits, at having been permitted by his guardian angel to retain the purse. But his glee was of short duration. The poor old Admiral had miscalculated his strength of mind ; and the effects of the shock of Genivra's fearful death—(which had not to himself appeared so serious, because in the resumption of his old habits at home he felt a degree of composure which he mistook for strength)—became apparent, when those habits were about to be in the least degree interrupted.

He had seemed tolerably cheerful in the early part of the ride, and occasionally spoke even with joyous excitement of seeing the Ghibelines once more masters of Pisa. As they proceeded, however, and especially as they approached the valley where they must cross the river, Sattarello observed, with compassion at first, and, finally, with anxiety, that the old man became silent and abstracted, and began to look before him as far as his eye could reach, with an air and expression of terrified anticipation.

"I doubt me," he said, at last, "that I am not so strong as I once was, mind or body ; and yet, Sattarello, there can be no flood now : we have had no rains for some time."

Sattarello assured him he had seen the river two days before, and that it was clear, bright, and still. The old man made no reply, but his anxiety seemed to increase as they came in sight of it.

"You see, my dear master, how calm it is," Sattarello observed.

"Calm ! do you call that calm ? Why it is terrifying !"

They proceeded a little farther, the anxiety of both increasing, though from different causes. At last Sattarello proposed that they should cross, wishing to prevent their arriving at the very point of the disaster.

"Cross !" repeated Lancia ; "would you have me cross *here* ? it is true my life is of little value, and I should bless the hour it ended—if—if I were a little better prepared to go ; for that man—that party has ruined me, body and soul ; but still one shrinks from a violent death—and oh ! Sattarello, after what I saw I could no more plunge voluntarily into that river than into—

Strange ! after all my life spent at sea ! and the thousands I have seen go down before my eyes, sometimes without a thought bestowed upon them, and all without leaving any impression on my nerves ; but, oh ! my God ! that day—that sight ! —that cry !—oh, take me away ! here, hold me, Sattarello, I grow weak !” and Sattarello, throwing himself from his horse, almost lifted the old man from his, and placing him sitting on the ground, did and said all in his power to recall him to his better self. He proposed that they should cross on the same horse, or that Sattarello should partly undress and walk beside that of Lancia ; for the river where they stopped was not more than three feet deep ; and finally, as a last resource, he asked if Lancia could be induced to cross it himself on foot ; but all, all was alike in vain—the nervous panic had completely seized upon the old man ; the sight of the water acted on him as it might on one afflicted with hydrophobia ; and, after an hour or two spent in the most humiliating and pitiable conflicts with himself, he consented to return home : and, perhaps never could there be imagined a more melancholy picture of our fallen nature than was presented by him in that return. He scarcely opened his

lips during the whole time ; and, as Sattarello helped him to dismount when they arrived, he observed that he leaned on him more heavily than usual, and that his countenance was more earnestly sad and less fiercely excited than it generally was. When they entered the house he still continued to lean on Sattarello's arm, and thus they entered the sitting-room which Lancia generally occupied, together. He then signed to him to shut the door, a ceremony even yet but little observed in unanglicised Italian houses.

"Sattarello," he then said, "I have received my death-blow—yes, I know it, I feel it—it may not be to-day nor to-morrow—but I must prepare. I see it—I see it—I am not to be permitted to witness that man's downfall ; and that through my own fear—fear—and fear of water ! So it seemed at least ; but, indeed, Sattarello, it was something more than that. I felt my horse again under me, refusing for whip, spur, or rein, to veer one inch from the spot to save her who was screaming to me for help as she was whirled round and round in the raging waters. Oh, God ! oh, God ! what a sight ! what a cry ! what a moment !—No—no—if the whole world were to be saved by my voluntarily plunging into water

again I could not do it—that is no fault of mine. Some part of me, my nerves I believe they call it, still feels the shock. I would thank any one who would plunge me in, but no one could do it, for I would at the same time resist the attempt like a mad dog. Listen to me, Sattarello, she has beckoned to me from that river. I know now I am not to triumph over Ugolino—a fine fellow, indeed, to triumph over any one ! Lancia is gone ! Federigo Lancia lives no more ! Let us see what can be done for his old soul. I cannot talk to any of the priests about me here ; I have resisted them too long. You must go to Pisa, Sattarello, and send me Fra Tommaso—do you hear ?”

And as we shall have no further to do with the old man, we shall leave him with the hope that is permitted us, for him who cometh even at the eleventh hour with the will to do well. The other Ghibeline chiefs found no obstacles in the way of their returning to Pisa. They flocked thither from all adjacent quarters, and amongst them was Buonconte, who happened to be on a visit in the neighbourhood : in two or three days the whole city had changed its aspect. Tranquillity was restored, but the bustle was

increased ; peace was declared, but not only were the guards and sentinels at the gates, and at all public places, redoubled, but it was well known that, while only the leaders of the Ghibelines came into the town, they left their followers and men-at-arms under orders, at their different castles, to be ready to repair to Pisa at a moment's notice ; and, in short, the public mind was in a sort of ferment which every one felt it was impossible could ever subside without an outlet. It is scarcely necessary to say that, notwithstanding the utmost precaution had been observed to prevent it, some part of this came to the knowledge and observation of Ugolino ; he gave no signs, however, of any uneasiness until some days had passed over, when feeling surprised at not receiving, at least, some communication from the Archbishop, yet wishing to avoid the appearance of either braving or distrusting him in whose hands he had placed his fate, he dispatched his confidential friend and captain, Tieri di Bientina, to ask whether there would be now any objection to his returning to Pisa. The Archbishop received the messenger himself ; and to the inquiry, he answered with a quiet smile that "there was not the least objection to his returning as soon

as it might suit him to do so." Tieri, being much more of a soldier than of a diplomatist, received and repeated the answer in all good faith ; but Ugolino felt somewhat surprised at its conciseness ; still, as it was favourable in the main point, he dismissed all minor considerations, and gave orders to his men to be in readiness to return next day to Pisa. About three o'clock they arrived before one of the gates ; and, finding it closed,—an unwonted circumstance at that hour,—Ugolino himself went forward to ask what it might mean. The answer was given in the voice of Buonconte himself, who was posted there to defend it with upwards of a hundred chosen men ; and who now gave orders, in a loud voice, every word of which reached Ugolino's ears, that the small side-gate should be half-opened, so as to admit only Ugolino himself and one companion. Before availing himself of this extraordinary order, Ugolino again demanded what it meant, but was again answered that so it was, and that no farther explanation could be given. On hearing this he drew back for a moment, as much, perhaps, to conceal the impotent wrath which shook his frame as to consider what was best for him to do.

"Open the door," he cried at length, as it had been again closed when he withdrew, "Open the city gates to the Capitano del Popolo," and he struck it impatiently with his foot.

The side gate was immediately opened as before, neither more nor less ; and Ugolino, finding it more difficult to battle with this silent, and quiet, but regulated opposition, than with the fiercest and loudest bravadoes, and ignorant of what might be the force within, decided that his less undignified proceeding would be to enter without incurring further insult ; and, accordingly, crying aloud to Tieri and his men to await his orders, which he should send them in a few minutes, he passed through with his son Brigata, and, being informed, in answer to his hasty inquiries, that the Archbishop was at that moment at the senate-house, where a council was sitting, he blessed himself for the chance, believing that in such an assemblage he could not want for friends and supporters of what he called justice ; and thither he accordingly repaired with furious and indignant strides, never allowing himself for one moment to suppose that amongst so many of his former friends and adherents he had not many still.

CHAPTER XVII.

In the mean time the senate was, as Ugolino had been told, assembled : as they had entered, one by one, or in groups, they had all been astonished to find the Archbishop already there, and not, as usual, in his clerical habiliments, but in brilliant armour, a richly-gemmed cross sparkling on his breast-plate being the only symbol of his holy calling ; he, on the other hand, when perfectly assured that as many as were necessary to constitute a council were assembled — and there were soon many more, for every one was too full of excitement not to seek for more wherever it might be hoped for — looked, for a moment, steadily, haughtily, almost fiercely, around him, and then, if his first address, on the day after the withdrawal of Ugolino and Nino Visconti, had been Christian-like, or at least moderate, it would seem as if it had only been so in order not to waste in detached

portions, aught of that venom, that reviling, that exposing of crime, of treachery, of the murder of innocents—for so he designated the death of the young and beautiful Genivra, the heroine, as it were, of the Ghibeline party—in short, of that moral poison which he now poured forth from his festered soul in one continuous, deep, rich, black deadly stream into the ears of his auditors with more than the power of human oratory—for when strong passions mix themselves with talent, the effect becomes supernatural—until each looked almost terrified, into the face of his neighbour, and all with the same expression respecting Ugolino, namely :—“ And this is the wretch with whom we associated so long ! ” There was but one crime of his that tremendous avenger left untouched, and that was the mainspring of all—and he did well ; he judged wisely that where the catalogue was already so black, silence, on a deed personally interesting to himself, was his best eloquence. To the astonishment of some, the admiration of others, and the bewilderment of all, he never made the slightest allusion to his nephew’s death.

“ Does he really doubt who caused it ? ” whispered one.

"He cannot bear to speak of him," whispered another; while some of those who had been absent from Pisa began to ask themselves and each other whether, after all, Ugolino had been the guilty one? But whatever might be the conjectures of each as to the cause of his silence, the universal feeling was of that vague disappointment caused by silence where we had expected a great sensation.

While these whispers were being hastily exchanged, the Archbishop proceeded with his harangue, his angry energy still increasing as he went on.

"And now, gentlemen," he exclaimed at last, starting to his feet, and causing the clatter of his sword and war-boots to resound as he did so, "and now, gentlemen, you perhaps suppose that I am about to ask you if you will recall such a tyrant to the head of the government, or to request your votes against him; but you are mistaken," he shouted, stamping his foot, and glaring defiantly round him. "If such had been my design I had come in my sacerdotal garb, in the garb of peace; but you see instead how I have come—and hear me tell you now the reason, it is to *die* ere that traitor put his foot again within

these walls except as a criminal. I have reason to think he will present himself this day, perhaps this very hour, at the gates with his armed band. I have ordered that they be defended against him, and that only"—and ere he had time to conclude the sentence, he of whom he spoke, in right of the situation he so lately held, and which no one as yet knew how to dispute with him, was already within the walls.

He was still in the height of the angry excitement caused by the insult he had received at the city gates ; and, as he entered now, and beheld all, apparently, more or less excited like himself, and the Archbishop dressed in new and complete armour, he felt almost as if in a dream ; but concluding, naturally enough, that where so much excitement was visible, there had been discussion and difference of opinion, his stout heart immediately prompted him to make an appeal to all, at once, and learn what the matter was in hand, and who were his friends or who his foes. His sudden appearance, exactly as the Archbishop might be said to have almost announced it, however unintentionally, had caused a moment's silence, even in the speaker himself ; but, no sooner did the Count attempt to take advantage

of that silence in order to address them, than such a scene ensued as is not only inconceivable, but almost incredible in our days of "*order*." He began,—

" You, O Senators, know—" but ere he could proceed one word farther, the sentence was finished for him with a furious and almost simultaneous burst from all of—

" That you are a wretch!"—" That you are a traitor!"—" That you are a murderer!"—" That you are a runaway!"—" A public robber!" intermingled with cries of " Vernaccia!"—" Vernaccia!"—" Meloria!"—" Golden florins!"—and every other charge which the Archbishop had made the principal points of his harangue, until such was the scene of uproar, opprobrium and reviling, that Ugolino became perfectly stunned, and for some moments made no attempt at arresting it, although he turned his head hastily and repeatedly from one to the other, as each took up the cry against him. At length, however, he observed that the voice of the Archbishop mingled not itself with these cries. He looked round him, indeed, as they proceeded, and not reprovingly, but this was difficult, in the confusion, to discern; and Ugolino, remembering

only the apparently undoubting sign he had given of the blindness of his friendship, in refusing to believe that the Count had been guilty of his nephew's death, and blessing now that blindness as his only hope in this critical moment, he appealed to him, though rather by gesticulations than by words, to procure a moment's silence, in order to allow him at least to be heard in his own defence.

The Archbishop, at this appeal, fixed his eyes, for the first time since Ubaldino's death, steadily, piercingly, alarmingly upon him ; he looked through the mist of voices, if we may say so, like a spirit of evil, gradually but visibly assuming bodily shape ; he rose slowly up, for he had hitherto been sitting since Ugolino's entrance ; he glared upon him, until first those nearest to him, and then gradually, all became attracted, frightened at the glare ; especially as the Archbishop's face had become livid, while his lips, little deeper in colour, visibly trembled ; and then, but without for a moment suspending his unearthly glare, as Ugolino again asked for permission to speak, he waved his hand around to procure silence, and in a voice, deep, hoarse, sepulchral, the slightest intonation of which sank with frightful effect into every ear and every heart, so that no one who

heard, ever again forgot, or remembered it without shuddering, he said,—

“ To speak?—you ask for leave to speak? Wretch, do you not know that it is the gurgling of my nephew’s blood in your throat which prevents you ?”

For the first time in his whole life Ugolino felt himself lost ; he stepped two paces backwards, keeping his eyes fixed, in horror and amazement, upon the man who had over-reached him in iniquitous deception, and as if overcome by the discovery, he made no farther attempt at explanation or defence, but, continuing to step backwards, he withdrew before any one had presence of mind enough to prevent him. The Archbishop, in the mean time, with all the effort he had made at calmness, was too deeply agitated at this first, and long-pent expression of feelings so intense not to betray signs of his being so. He resumed his seat in silence ; but the heaving of his breast, the distension of his nostrils, and the red glare of his eye-balls, were visible at the farthest part of that vast apartment, while his breathing was audible to all immediately around him.

For a moment the senators themselves were stunned—it might almost be said frightened—by a burst so unexpected ; but, as they re-

covered, there arose first a murmur and then a cry to hurry after Ugolino and seize him. To the cries and murmurs Ruggieri seemed to pay no attention ; but, as some attempted to rush forth for the purpose, a tremendous voice was heard shouting—

“ Touch him not !—molest him not, at your perils ! He is *mine* !”

And the fierce men shrank back, appalled, feeling there was import beyond their comprehensions in the words. When they had resumed their seats, and silence was restored—

“ Hear and obey me now !” Ruggieri resumed. “ The hour is come for action. You have your men and arms prepared ? It is well. Send a messenger, each of you, to your several castles. There are twelve ready prepared waiting for your orders. Call in your men, so that they may be here before the break of day — only, cautioning them not to approach the gate leading to Settimo. And if, by misfortune, they should meet with any molestation from the opposite party, they are not to notice it in any way : tell them such are *my orders*—the orders of the Capitano-Podestà—and that I promise them if they stay their appetites for a moment, they shall feast the heartier ere long !”

And, with such words, the representative of the Prince of Peace dismissed his senators, who, bewildered and subdued, went forth, like attendant spirits, to do the behests of the master-fiend, even while abhorring them. And such were the words with which he himself cast aside the character he had maintained so long—we will not say falsely; for a man struggling successfully for half a century against the violence of his passions is not to be called a hypocrite, though he be overcome at last, though his arms relax, and no friendly hand be nigh to hold them up, and the sun go down upon his wrath, giving the earthly victory, indeed, to him, but the eternal one to his enemy !

Ugolino, in the mean time, had left the senate-house, not less bewildered than those who remained behind him. But his life—his soul—we may say, his mind—was, action—action—action ! He uttered not a word, as, followed by his terrified son, he strode direct to his own dwelling-house. But, in that short space of time, his bold spirit had recovered its equilibrium, and only cursing himself for having temporised so long, he gave orders that an emissary of fidelity should be forthwith dispatched to Tieri di Bientina, desiring him not to make the slightest

attempt to enter for the present ; but, instead, to send forth men in all directions to seize upon as many boats as could be found along the river or in any place ; to call in all the adherents of the Guelphic party, and cause them, as they valued that name, to assemble next morning, and enter the city by means of such boats, while Tieri should profit by the confusion thus created to force the gates at the same moment.

And thus did two men, on their own responsibility—and, if their motives were duly analysed, it might be found for their own private feelings of revenge—set the fate of their country, the lives of their fellow-countrymen, upon a stake so hastily, so sinfully thrown.

In the meantime, the doomed inhabitants sank to rest once more, unconscious of the stormy dawn which awaited them. The orders of the rival commanders had been duly executed, and their measures taken : and, accordingly, the first news which greeted the ears of Ruggieri—who was up, and again dressed in armour, long before the sun—was, that the friends of Ugolino were entering the city, not only by boats, but by swimming—some carrying their swords between their teeth !

Ruggieri on hearing it, rubbed his hands in irrepressible glee, as he exclaimed,—

“ It is, then, exactly as I foresaw! Let some one hasten to him from me, and say, that rather than risk the lives of our children by exposing them to take cold, the gates shall be immediately opened to them ; and all I ask in return for this courtesy is, that he and his will withdraw instantly from the city, and consider themselves exiled, on pain of death, from the Republic ! ” and at the same moment, waiting only to glance his eye over the numbers of Ghibelines who, fresh and well prepared, filed into their ranks in the Piazza della Cattedrale, close to his palace, he dispatched orders to Buonconte, who had kept guard over the gate all night, to throw it open and come with his one hundred men to join the main body.

When Ugolino received this message, he smiled grimly ; for, notwithstanding the request rather than the order, with which it was clogged, he read in it a virtual yielding to the exigency of the moment ; for so cautiously had Ruggieri’s measures been taken, and so strict was the interdict on all communication between the parties within and those without the gates, that Ugolino had not, up to that moment, an idea of what those

measures had been. Detaining the messenger, then, only until he heard his faithful Tieri shouting his war-cry under his window,—

“Go back,” he said, “to him who sent you and say, that we mete courtesy as we receive it, but that a traitor deserves no mercy,” and without further delay, or waiting to know what the preparations or intentions of the adversary had been, he commanded one of those sudden onslaughts which had often served his cause in his long and eventful career.

When the Archbishop heard that the battle was actually begun, he seized by the shoulder the person who had come to say so ; and while he clutched him in the gripe of a demon,—

“He is there himself?—you are sure of it?—you saw him with arms in his hands against his very fellow-citizens? You are sure of it?—enough! enough!” he shouted; and then, in a low, calm, meek tone, which, as if mimicking what had once been his own, made all shudder who heard it, —“We must now *defend* ourselves,” he said, and rushed forth into the fray! In half an hour after the streets of Pisa were streaming with the blood of her children, shed premeditatedly and determinately by each other’s hands.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ingredients of human nature were then, in proportion to each other, the same that they are now, and civil war then, as now, was the bitterest and most deadly of all wars ; because its causes and provocations are always the more personal, and the more deeply felt. This fearful characteristic was now making itself heard in every curse, as friend recognised friend ; making itself seen in every blow, as brother's hand was raised against brother ; nor, alas ! was this the climax of the horrors of that fearful morning.

Tieri di Bientina, the best and bravest of those who had adhered to Ugolino, had been severely wounded almost at the onset, and his place of command filled by Brigata, the son of Ugolino ; but as if the old general had only felt, in the loss of his faithful second, a double call upon him to act for both, he threw himself with such fresh and sudden fury into the very thickest of the fight, shouting

to his men to avenge the death of their captain, that favoured for a moment by the position of the street where they had arrived, it appeared as if the Ghibelines were giving way before him.

“Strike on ! strike on ! my Guelphs,” he shouted ; “keep up your hearts for a moment more, and the day is ours. Down with the renegade priest who sacrifices his church and state to his own ambition !” and his words seemed to excite the passions that such allusions ought to quell ; and the effect appeared to be commensurate, when, as he turned his head once more to cry, “Well done ! well struck, brave lances !” to those doing prodigies of valour beside him, without at the same time, giving one moment’s respite to his own home-thrusts, his ear was suddenly pierced by a cry — a death cry of, “Ah, my father !” and looking down to draw out his sword from him he had pierced, he was, for a second, blinded by the spout of blood which followed it from the heart of his own — illegitimate son.* The spirit of Ugolino was well-nigh indomitable ; when he lost a battle it was ever by calculation, never by want of courage ; but, Ugolino was a father, a stern, an undemonstrative, and sometimes

* Historical.

a cruel one, it is true—as the very fact of his son fighting against him might almost suffice to show ; but still he was a father, and that is a character in itself ; a father is a father—is in a relationship to some being in which no other being can be to that one ; a good father is more than a father—he is a friend, a guide, a teacher ; but a bad father is not less than a father—he still stands in that peculiar degree of relationship to another as does a good father ; and, if sane, must have the feelings, more or less strongly thereunto belonging. The illegitimate son of Ugolino was, by one of those freaks in which Nature sometimes indulges, in almost every particular the reverse of his father—good, sincere, affectionate, but deficient in intellect. The Guelphic relations of his mother, to whose care he was almost entirely consigned, had in vain endeavoured to make him one of them. He was now a man of twenty-six or twenty-eight years of age, and in his youth he had heard that his father was a Ghibeline, and from this idea there was no possibility of detaching him—he was laughed at, insulted, beaten, for his credulity, but he laughed, insulted, beat in his turn, and then went to his father for explanation ; and when he could not understand

that explanation he attributed it to his own stupidity, and he jogged on a Ghibeline merely because he believed he was thereby doing his father's will ; while that father, with, perhaps, more of Nature's animal feelings towards him than towards those from whom he expected more and received less, suffered him to go on his own way unmolested, in the consciousness that the blind and untoward devotion of that simple heart sometimes served him in his double-dealings better than more studied efforts would have done. When the summons went forth for Guelph and Ghibeline to hasten to Pisa, this man was in the country with his mother. She endeavoured to dissuade him from joining in the fray ; but, with the devoted bravery of such natures he slipped away at night, in order to be near his father for good or for evil.

On the fatal morning, which puzzled wiser men than he, some thoughtless persons, more for fun than malice, had mystified him still more ; and preventing him from joining the troops of his father by one ridiculous tale and stratagem or another, they persuaded him that the only way left for him to be useful, would be to appear in the opposite ranks, and then go over to his

side. He was in the very act of following this council, when his father's hand, striking him to the ground, caused the cry we have just heard.

Ugolino's heart quailed within him when he heard it ; and, as he wiped the frightful moisture from his eyes, it was replaced by tears, and he stooped in the hope of finding that he had not re-taken the life he had given. As he did so, the dying man seized his hand, in order to press it to lips already cold in death, but his grasp stiffening as he did so, he drew his father to his knees, and that movement was fatal to his cause. Those around, when they saw Ugolino sink, believed him wounded ; and the report ran through the ranks that he was killed. The struggle lasted not much longer, though he himself and a few of his devoted adherents—amongst them his sons and grandsons, seemed determined to sell their lives as dearly as was possible—they were forced backwards through the streets from which they had come ; but they fought step by step, until they arrived at Ugolino's principal dwelling-house ; where, as many as could enter, taking shelter, they seemed determined to defend it like a forlorn hope. But there was a determi-

nation yet more powerful than theirs, and beneath which theirs was forced to bend.

It is not known that Ruggieri actually imbrued his hands in his people's blood ; but he was seen and heard like an avenging spirit, everywhere directing, exhorting, commanding ; and now, as Ugolino and his friends betook themselves to the shelter of his almost impregnable palace, an authoritative voice was heard issuing orders to reduce it by fire ! It would seem as if Ugolino did not for some time believe it possible that this was aught beyond a threat to frighten them into submission ; but when he saw, from the windows, the piles of wood and other combustibles, placed before the doors, and round and under the windows, and heard the horrid shouts of those to whom the excitement was diversion, he saw that all was but too real—all was but too true—and, for the first time in his life, his haughty lips formed themselves to the words, “ We surrender !”

They were immediately placed in chains, he and his sons, and grandsons, and led across the street to the tower which stood almost opposite ; they were imprisoned there with a guard over them of two hundred men—and then was seen the real feeling of the people towards the

tyrant. It was in vain that they were now ordered to remove the piles of wood and materials for the fire, and to save one of the most magnificent palaces of Pisa—the promised diversion was too great to be thus lightly, as they thought, recalled ; the spark was applied, and in a very short time the gathered treasures of ages, were scattered far and wide through the streets, and passing from hand to hand of those who knew not even what they meant. A portion of these spoils, an heraldic emblazonment of the noble and ancient family of Gherardesca, is still to be seen behind what is called the “ *Sapienza* ” at Pisa.

When the excited passions, of whatever kind, are gratified, they not only generally subside, but, if gratified without measure or moderation, not unfrequently produce a reaction. It might be supposed that Ruggieri would now feel this reaction, and that his rival crushed to the very ground, in chains, in a prison, with his surviving sons, after having just taken the life of one, might have seemed even to him, a sufficient sacrifice to the manes of his nephew. But it was not so ! Well may we be exhorted to persevere unto the end ; for fearful is the relapse of a

desperate spirit, long but not radically subdued. The oak may be bent for ever if the ligatures are strong enough—but if they burst, fearful will be the rebound! For many hours, indeed, the Archbishop occupied himself in restoring such order to the distracted city as circumstances admitted of. He had the streets cleared, and sent orders to the different ecclesiastical bodies to occupy themselves with the dead and the bereaved survivors; but there was no longer that parental sympathy, that holy forethought, that brought consolation to all on the morning of the news of the battle of Meloria, by elevating the minds of the sufferers from earth to heaven.

The good, the kind, the judicious Archbishop had disappeared, and left in his stead a stern and despot governor, who took thought for all that was necessary for the safety of his own government, without any other end or aim.

The tower into which Ugolino and his sons had been hastily thrown, was by no means either sufficiently secure to satisfy his fears, or detached enough from human intercourse to content his hate. He meditated for a short space to what place he might have him removed, where both these objects might be accomplished, and he fixed

on that which Bonatti seemed to have fixed on upwards of two years before ; namely, the Tower of the Muda — deep, strong, impregnable, where the last eagle of the Republic had died on the day before the battle of Meloria. It was some time since it had been used as a prison for human beings ; and, although eminently calculated to cut off hope, and worthy of the name “Torre della Fame,” it happened to be at that time considerably in want of repairs. Ruggieri directed that such should be made ; and, not content with giving the order, he so far forgot what yet might be preserved of, at least, the outward dignity of his position and calling, as to descend himself repeatedly into the dungeon to superintend the operations ; with his own hand trying the strength and security of the locks and various fastenings ! It was an unholy sight ! it was a melancholy sight !

At last all was completed—completed even to his satisfaction ; once more he revisited every nook, and lock, and bar ; and, casting a last glance, ere withdrawing for ever from that place of woe, he muttered not “*it is good,*” but “*it will do !*”

In the mean time, the commotion in the city partially subsided. Though there were many

who rejoiced in the downfall of Ugolino, they were not those who had now, and without a moment's time for preparation, lost son, brother, or husband in bringing about that downfall ; and of those who, through fear, or respect, or habit, or self-interest, had yet remained faithful to him, there was not one who did not feel that his punishment was already more than could be justified even by Ubaldino's death, and that it would only be necessary to remind the Archbishop of what his sufferings must be, and of his own holy calling, to induce him to change the prison of his fallen foe for a distant exile.

The moment this idea was started, all seemed to agree that it ought to be acted upon ; and, accordingly, after much consultation, as to who should be the person to venture to act as remembrancer to the Archbishop, they decided upon the Prior of St. Dominick's, who, with Fra Bonafazio, had remained shut up in his convent ; no one of those present being covetous of the honour.

A certain number then repaired to the convent, and made known the decision ; and although the prior felt that, by his absenting himself from the people, he had overshot his mark, he could find no pretext for refusing, in the face of so many,

an office so suited to his calling ; and which, between him and the Archbishop, ought not to be one of much embarrassment.

While he withdrew, however, to take his hood or cowl, preparatory to going into the streets, he seized a moment to communicate with Fra Bonafazio, between whom and himself recent circumstances had converted acquaintanceship into familiarity, if not friendship, on the new task that had devolved upon him.

The frate drew a very unclerical length of sound, which in our days would be called a whistle, on hearing of it.

"Would you make a bargain with me ?" he asked.

"Of what sort ?"

"Would you become Fra Bonafazio and let me become prior at this moment ?"

"I really think I would," said the prior, growing more frightened every moment.

"And I would *not*!" retorted Fra Bonafazio ; "a pleasant journey to you !"

They were mistaken, however, in supposing the prior incurred any risk in doing his behest to the Archbishop. Ruggieri was by no means what is commonly understood by an ill-tempered

man. Men of strong passions, or of great talents, rarely are, unless from some temporary physical cause, or in the decline of the faculties ; and now his energies and feelings were by far too deeply occupied to have any to spare on trifles. When the prior was introduced then, and mentioned the object of his visit, and that he had been accompanied to the gates of the palace by a concourse of persons, who had suggested and were deeply interested in the issue, Ruggieri listened to him, with a smile so calm, so bland, that he began to feel certain of success. When he had completely finished, however, and the Archbishop paused in order to be quite sure that it was so, the latter looked steadily into his eyes for a moment, as if he was about to announce the most amiable or agreeable thing in the world ; and then, with a voice perfectly in accordance with the smile, he said,

“ You will bear this answer to your fellow-petitioners, prior, that if ‘ my nephew ’ had come to ask pardon for Ugolino, I had granted it ! ”

And the prior withdrew, without offering another word ; and all felt that there was some terrible influence over their destinies, which they had not the means to counteract.

What is the new stir amongst the Ghibelines ? Whither are the chiefs of that party hurrying to and fro ? Why has Buonconte, who shewed such prowess on the bloody day of their triumph, suddenly disappeared from the scene, without waiting to reap the reward of such deeds ? And, above all, whence is the strange sight—we might almost say the portent—of the Archbishop—the Archbishop of Pisa, who for more than fourteen years had been respected as such, being seen repeatedly to leave his palace, and climbing to the top of the Campanile, strain his eyes in the direction of the Val di Serchio ; and, at last, as a cloud of dust is suddenly seen to arise in the distance, and the black eagle once more to stand out from the white mantle of Montefeltro, who approaches with his chosen band, why does the Archbishop descend with rapid strides, and as he crosses the green-sward, with almost the light and springing step of youth, why is he heard to mutter, in the irrepressible tone of ecstasy,—

“ *Now, now he dies !* ”

It was because when the old warrior was led in chains from one prison to the other, with his head uncovered, and his grey hairs floating on the wind—bowed at last by sorrow and suffering,

followed by two sons and two grandsons in the prime of manhood and the bloom of youth, there had been attempted a re-action in their favour ; and, even now, as Ruggieri uttered the words, “he dies !” his faithful chaplain, still and ever at his side, looked hastily but stealthily round, to see that no other ears than his caught the sounds, and then ventured to suggest the danger, both temporal and ecclesiastical, of shedding the blood of one not yet condemned to death by the senate, Ruggiero turned round, and fixing his eyes on his with an expression which, happily, words cannot depict, he said, “There are more ways of causing death than by shedding blood !”

THE END.

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